

The New Testament Interpreted

Essays in Honour of
Bernard C. Lategan

Edited by
Cilliers Breytenbach,
Johan C. Thom &
Jeremy Punt

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PREFACE

This volume is the result of an Alexander von Humboldt Colloquium, “Interpreting the New Testament,” which took place at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advance Study (STIAS) from 12 to 14 August 2004. The colloquium was organized by two of the editors, Cilliers Breytenbach and Johan Thom, to honour Bernard Lategan for his important contribution to New Testament scholarship in South Africa and internationally. Having studied ancient languages, linguistics, literature and theology at the Universities of the Free State and Stellenbosch, and after completing his doctoral studies at Kampen in the Netherlands, Lategan started his academic career as Professor of New Testament at the University of the Western Cape (1969–1977) and subsequently served as Professor of Biblical Studies at the University of Stellenbosch (1978–1991). Not only during his formal teaching career, but also after he became dean of the Faculty of Arts at Stellenbosch (1991–1996), then member of the management team of the university (1997–2000) and finally founding director of STIAS (2000–), Bernard Lategan exercised notable influence on members of the New Testament Society of South Africa, which he also served as General Secretary for several terms. The role Bernard Lategan played on an international level during the eighties and nineties to introduce members of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* to modern hermeneutical issues through the various seminars he chaired is undisputed. The editors are aware of the fact that many of the participants in those seminars and indeed many other South African colleagues would have been eager to contribute to a volume honouring Bernard Lategan.

The present volume, however, only includes revised versions of papers presented at the Humboldt Colloquium and selected after a peer-review process. The contributors are therefore mainly South African “Humboldtianer” and younger New Testament scholars associated with South African universities. (A notable exception is Detlev Dormeyer, who served as Bernard Lategan’s host when the latter was an Alexander von Humboldt fellow at the Westfälische-Wilhelms-Universität in Münster.) The editors are nevertheless convinced that the selection of essays presented in this volume gives a good overview

not only of the various areas of New Testament scholarship to which Lategan contributed, but also of New Testament Studies in South Africa in general.

As organisers of the Colloquium, the editors express their thanks to the authors for their participation and their subsequent contributions to this volume. The Colloquium would not have been possible without the generous financial assistance of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in Bonn. The staff of STIAS and the International Office of the University of Stellenbosch kindly provided administrative support. We are also grateful to the editors of *Novum Testamentum Supplements*, Margaret Mitchell and David Moessner, for accepting the volume for publication in the series, to Ivo Romein and Loes Schouten of Brill for their friendly and efficient support, and last but not least, to Renée Fourie and Anja Sakowski, our editorial assistants at the University of Stellenbosch and the Institute for Christianity and Antiquity at the Humboldt University in Berlin, respectively. They all deserve the heartfelt thanks of both editors and authors.

Cilliers Breytenbach

Johan Thom

Jeremy Punt

Berlin and Stellenbosch, Easter 2006

PART ONE

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE INTERPRETER

INTERPRETER INTERPRETED: A READER'S RECEPTION OF LATEGAN'S LEGACY

D. J. Smit

ABSTRACT

The paper proposes a particular reading of Bernard Lategan's influential theological work. It argues that he is such an innovative and widely respected Biblical scholar for several reasons, including the inclusive way in which he reads Biblical texts, his continued interest in and emphasis on the reality of these texts, his attention to the persuasive thrust of these texts, and his attempts to serve the public power of these texts. In all four these ways he often distinguished himself from the commonly accepted practices of many of his contemporaries and peers in the guild. The paper demonstrates the role and importance of these four interpretive interests in Lategan's life and work and his academic leadership that resulted from these intuitions and convictions, and concludes by arguing that all four are characteristics of Reformed theology, and that this might even be the deepest inspiration and motivation behind Lategan's scholarly legacy.

1. *Introduction*

Without doubt, Bernard Lategan has been one of the most respected scholars in South Africa over several decades, whether in theological, church, academic or public circles. There exist, again without any doubt, many and diverse reasons for this respect. Colleagues, friends and students will offer many different accounts and tell many different stories explaining their appreciation for his person, life and work. There is no single and authoritative way of understanding his many contributions and his lasting legacy in several spheres of South African life. In fact, the text of his life and work calls for diverse readings and different receptions, of which the following is only one, and perhaps even a controversial one, since it may be taken as a (mis)reading from an outsider perspective.

As a Biblical scholar, and seen amongst his peers, Lategan is known and respected for different qualities. At least *four* of these qualities have always been fairly obvious, yet remarkable when compared to the majority of his colleagues in the circles of South African Biblical, particularly NT scholarship, and in the light of the dominant discourses and commonly accepted interpretive practices of the past few decades in these communities of interpretation.

He has been known for the remarkably *inclusive* way in which he reads the Biblical texts (2), for his continued interest in and emphasis on the *reality* of these texts (3), for his exceptional attention to the *persuasive thrust* of these texts (4), and for his deliberate attempts to serve the *public* power of these texts (5). In all four ways, he was in a way exceptional and remarkable when compared to what others were doing, and perhaps therefore also so highly respected and appreciated outside the closed circles of his immediate academic context.

In the following four sections, brief reminders will serve to refresh the memory concerning these rather remarkable aspects of Lategan's life and work. In a final section, a short and somewhat speculative attempt at interpreting the life and work of this skilled and influential interpreter will be suggested (6).

2. *Reading texts inclusively*

From the beginning, Lategan refused to use only one exegetical or interpretive method. His own methodological approach was deliberately comprehensive and as far as possible inclusive. Over decades, this was according to many his most incisive contribution to Biblical scholarship in South Africa.

In a time when many of his colleagues followed one exegetical method on the international market after the other with almost evangelistic zeal, and when annual conferences of the scholarly societies celebrated the newest methodological inventions with almost religious enthusiasm, Lategan continued to provide a comprehensive, inclusive framework. Nothing new could really surprise him. Every method was a response to a legitimate question, and in some way or another, they all contributed to the comprehensive, complex task of reading and interpretation. This is evident throughout his work, whether he was relating hermeneutics and history (1970); hermeneutics and

linguistics (1973a); revelation and history (1974b); historicism and structuralism (1978a); exegesis and structural analysis (1978c); history and faith (1979); static and dynamic aspects of reading (1986a); reception and socio-linguistics (1986b); reception theory and exegesis (1987c); intertextuality and social transformation (1989a); the complex notions of reader (1989b); reader response and audience criticism (1992b); reception theories (1992d); rhetorical strategies (1993c); views on the nature of religious texts (1995c); different readerships (1996b); and again, history and reality (2004); see also Woest (1993), for an integrative systematic-theological perspective, in a definite way inspired by Lategan.

A whole series of his best-known and most widely read papers and articles, over several decades, documents his growing interest in and his increasingly careful distinctions within this inclusive, comprehensive interpretive framework, whether on general conditions for effective hermeneutics (1973b); hermeneutics and preaching (1974a); contemporary directions (1978a); legal hermeneutics (1980); a general introduction to NT hermeneutics (1982); current issues (1984); some unresolved issues (1985a); reception, redescription and reality (1985b); a comprehensive hermeneutical framework (1992a); or possible future trends (1997b). One of the first, extremely influential examples was his paper at the Rustenburg annual meeting of the *New Testament Society of South Africa*, published as *Current Issues in the Hermeneutical Debate* (1984). This paper was perhaps one of the most widely read and intensely discussed theological articles during that decade. To many it was like a voice of reason, describing why so many methodologies seem to contradict and succeed one another in the circles of Biblical scholarship. Every question, every approach, every method had its place, was legitimate, belonged somewhere, should be heard. That was typical Lategan, to be applied in many ways in other areas of his life and thought as well.

Gradually, however, he extended this inclusive, comprehensive approach to include not only diverse methodologies but also diverse communities of interpretation, or diverse groups of readers. He began to emphasise the importance of context in interpretation and therefore of the inherent and inescapable contextuality of all reading and interpretation, also of the Biblical texts. Readers could follow him introducing a new research project on contextual hermeneutics (1990c); reflecting on the challenge of contextuality (1991b); doing theology in the context of the humanities (1993a); reporting on contextual

hermeneutics (1994a); and considering the role of the Bible in modern contexts (1995a). He initiated a *Centre for Contextual Hermeneutics* at the University of Stellenbosch, invited many interesting international scholars consciously working within contextual paradigms, published several contributions on the theory of contextuality—and in practice became increasingly interested in different, concrete, live readings and reader groups. He reflected on the readings of so-called ordinary readers and on unofficial readings, he encouraged empirical research into so-called real readings, and he published extensively on reception theories (1985b; 1986b; 1987c; 1992d), on empirical readings (1988c; 1992e), and on reader theories (1989b; 1992b).

Again, this was part and parcel of his inclusive approach to interpretation. The Bible does not only belong to scholarly, professional interpreters, but to a complex, diverse group of potential communities of interpretation. During these years, Lategan increasingly spoke of the democratisation of reading and interpretation, and about the inclusivity of reading and interpretation. Again, this was not the common theory and practice in the scholarly circles, but it made much sense to many others—also from outside these scholarly societies—who were also interested in reading the Bible and it made very interesting and creative discussions possible, including a variety of inter-disciplinary meetings and consultations, many of them initiated and organised by Lategan himself. Increasingly, it also certainly inspired research projects and doctoral and postdoctoral work in the narrower circles of Biblical scholarship in South Africa.

Quite concretely, within theological and ecclesial circles itself, this inclusive approach meant for Lategan that the Biblical texts should be read ecumenically. In his own life, he has demonstrated and practised this ecumenical commitment in a variety of ways, some of them again remarkable and sometimes even controversial. For Lategan, contextual hermeneutics does not limit the scope for dialogue, with each community reading from its own perspective and unable to communicate with readers in another context. On the contrary, he insisted that practising contextual hermeneutics is of necessity a collective task, since our own discourses can become enslaving and restrictive. Contextual hermeneutics can only succeed within an ecumenical context, and especially so in the South African situation, where our worlds are so far apart that we often despair in bridging them, he wrote even after the fall of *apartheid* (1994a). Contextuality

does not exclude ecumenicity but is precisely the call for a concrete, embodied form of live ecumenicity and togetherness, even and precisely in ideological conflicts.

At the same time, and perhaps precisely because of this intuitive conviction, already from the earliest days of his academic career, albeit in very diverse ways over the years, Lategan has never surrendered notions like validity of interpretation, adequate readings, responsible hermeneutics or integrated understanding. It was on his proposal that the New Testament Society invited me as systematic theologian to respond to their different readings of the same pericope with reflections on responsible hermeneutics (Smit 1988). It was this same interest that has made him search for the role of religion in inter-group relations in the conflict-ridden South African society (1985c; 1986d). He went *Op soek na 'n gemeenskaplike waardesisteem* [In Search of a Common System of Values] (1986e). He did research on how common values are established and embodied in situations of diversity and conflict. He contributed to *The Option for Inclusive Democracy* (1987b) at a time when few of his academic colleagues appreciated this passion. He was committed to *Crossing Borders in Search of Common Ground* (1989c). He helped in bringing scholars together in an inter-disciplinary meeting in order to contribute to common paradigm formation (1988b). Within a common framework, within a shared paradigm, within an integrated approach, even seemingly radical diversity can be creative—this was Lategan's deep conviction, demonstrated in his NT scholarship, but not limited to that.

Perhaps this was his truly remarkable intuition and contribution, not often enough understood and appreciated by some of his close followers. For him, inclusivity, comprehensiveness, acknowledging contextuality and affirming the democratisation of reading never meant arbitrariness, a vague anything-goes plurality of interpretations, or relativism. To put it in the words of Michael Welker, the well-known theorist of pluralist societies, Lategan's conception was never one of vague plurality, but always one of structured pluralism (see Compaan 2002). Acknowledging all possible plurality—of material in these texts, of methodological approaches to these texts, of reading communities interested in these texts, of socio-historical contexts—he was continuously searching for creative, integrated, structured, valid, legitimate, responsible, adequate, yes, true readings. However, legitimate, responsible, adequate, and true in terms of what?

3. *Respecting the reality of these texts*

To insist, as Lategan did, that interpretation should be adequate to the text—to the kind of texts that are being read—might seem like a common sense contribution. Yet this contribution built on extremely radical presuppositions and had far-reaching consequences for the practice of Biblical scholarship in South Africa. Through the years, he never tired of repeating this dictum, and very often it was not really heard or understood by many of his colleagues and peers—or in any case appreciated and accepted.

The claim seems so simple. An important feature of contextual hermeneutics is the reappraisal of the Biblical text, not its abolition, he said. Why? Because the communities of interpretation amongst the real, ordinary everyday readers of these texts in the ecumenical church, assure us that for them these texts are the Bible, the living Word of the living God. They read with an interpretive interest in these texts which the scholars, those professionals skilled in the exegetical trade, must (again, if necessary) take seriously. Contextual hermeneutics, done ecumenically, together with the real readers, teaches us this—to interpret and rephrase Lategan's powerful claim.

His academic colleagues, however, seemed to have missed the point of this simple claim. We have lost sight of the real purpose of our exegetical trade, a fact he bemoans during the important national and inter-disciplinary paradigm-conference (1988b). There is an urgent need to change the order of our questions, he therefore claims. Instead of asking "what is the best method to use", the first question ought to be "what is the object to be interpreted", he explains (1988b).

Again, this insight is not new. In different ways, this claim and this concern appeared like an important thread in the development of his earlier work. This was clearly illustrated in a well-known, published debate between himself and Willem S. Vorster concerning the relation between text and reality in 1985. In a remarkable passage on the validity of interpretation, Lategan brings together many of his main convictions and concerns:

The text with its constraints thus serves as the *Gegenüber* or foil, which is not only interpreted by the reader but which, in its turn, interprets and shapes the reader. The final act of understanding is indeed an existential event, implying an individual and personal decision regarding the meaning of the text. It cannot be manipulated or controlled and the limits of what can be achieved by the scaffolding of theory

must be accepted. The preparation for the act of understanding and the reflection upon it—giving reasons for a specific reading—no longer is a private affair, but must be able to stand up to public scrutiny, to be justified in terms of the text and the situation of the receptor. . . . At this point an important distinction should be kept in mind. The question of a “valid” reading is closely tied to the type of text under consideration. The problem of an adequate/inadequate reading becomes more acute in the case of “normative” texts, like religious and legal literature. . . . Added to this is the influence of the body of believers, which in theological thought is the *Ort* where understanding takes place. This represents a special form of the insistence on public criteria for interpretation and makes understanding even more of a communal matter. But even here, the intention of communicative participation in the process of interpretation is not to close off the text, but to make sure that it is launched on its proper trajectory, thereby keeping it open to its intended future (1985a, 16).

These texts interpret and shape the readers. Understanding is an existential event, not achieved by theory alone. Valid reading of religious texts, like the Biblical documents, also involves the body of believers and theological thought, since it is a communal matter, and the goal of even this communicative and public interpretation is never to close off these texts, but instead to keep them open to their intended future. These are very clear words—and very remarkable, given the dominant scholarly discourses in the South African guild at the time.

What exactly is this “intended future” of the Biblical texts? Through the years, Lategan would answer this question—often implicitly—in a variety of ways and with different methodological tools, appealing to diverse figures (Ricoeur for example remained of particular importance, albeit in different ways), positions and contributions. It was as if he was always looking for discussion partners who were also affirming this intention, this future of the Biblical texts. At the time of this debate with Vorster they were using the more abstract language of reality, reference and even ontology, but again and again he would also deal with this question more directly and with substantive theological terminology.

In that regard, his doctoral dissertation (1967) already made interesting reading; as it still does. It is difficult to imagine a more fundamental topic for a doctoral student in NT studies to research than the relationship between Jesus and Paul! It was indeed a study in the origin and nature of the Christian faith itself, as he wrote at the time (1967, 13), almost a systematic-theological question. It is perhaps

therefore no wonder that philosophers and systematic theologians (like Jüngel) would become major discussion partners in his own reflections. Even the title speaks for itself, namely, *The Earthly Jesus in Paul's Preaching*—Paul is seen primarily as preacher, as proclaimer, of a message most certainly involving the earthly Jesus. Some longer quotations remain instructive, since they provide an early insight into Lategán's continuing interest in the theological reality, which constitutes and opens up the intended future of the Biblical preaching:

Paul does not present the earthly Jesus in the same way as the gospels. A most interesting point is the identification of the earthly Jesus and the exalted Lord, which forms the underlying principle of all Paul's references to Jesus. It is evident that the whole basis of Paul's preaching is the earthly life of Jesus, his suffering, death and resurrection. He refers to decisive moments in Jesus' life (e.g. the Last Supper) and is familiar with his earthly conduct. Furthermore, Jesus' life is of normative value to Paul. It is placed in a distinct theological framework, as is particularly clear from his references to Jesus in paranetical contexts. Taking Paul's reception and transmission of tradition concerning the earthly Jesus, it becomes clear that for Paul the tradition concerning Jesus is invested with absolute authority. Far from discovering a fundamental breach between Paul and Jesus, evidence suggests that for the apostle as witness of the resurrection, there existed a three-fold continuity with the earthly life of Jesus in the pre-resurrection period: a continuity with regard to the authority of Jesus' words, to the normative character of his earthly conduct and to the mission entrusted to his disciples by Jesus already during his lifetime.

This "distinct theological framework" not only keeps the continuities and internal coherence of the major NT traditions in view, but also leads the young Lategán to extremely interesting critical views concerning dominant approaches to historical understanding at the time, a theme and in fact views that would remain integral to his fields of interest, and reappear very powerfully in recent years—but still in almost exactly the same way.

A discussion of the hermeneutical and philosophical presuppositions underlying the existentialist interpretation reveals to what extent the past, experienced as a problematic phenomenon, is devaluated or ignored in this approach. The apparent failure of the historical-critical method to establish any meaningful contact with the reality of past events, leads to the remoulding of theological propositions in the form of anthropological statements. This approach to the New Testament however encounters an insurmountable difficulty in the fact that the past resists this process of actualisation. A more promising line seems

to be the recognition and utilization of the distinct *heilsgeschichtliche* structure of Paul's theology. Rightly understood, this approach makes it possible to do justice both to the eschatological import of the Biblical message *hic et nunc* and to the historical events in the past which form the basis and content of the *kerygma*.

Lategan's scholarly interest was in understanding history in more fruitful ways than those offered by the extreme positions of existentialism and historicism. He embraced neither existentialism's assault on the future, nor historicism's assault on the past. Much of the appreciation and respect that Lategan enjoys in theological and church circles is associated with the creative and exciting, inspiring and challenging ways in which he has opened these avenues of understanding history, life and the Biblical message during the past decades. The past remains real while the future is opened up. In the dissertation, he would continue to spell this out in very clear and explicit theological language:

The identification of the earthly Jesus and the exalted Lord is of particular importance. Although the former is always qualified by the latter, the reverse is of equal consequence, viz. that the exalted Lord is in every respect qualified by the earthly Jesus. Paul clearly places Jesus' life in the context of God's covenant with his people, thereby linking Jesus with the past, but at the same time opening up a promise for the future. The transition of Jesus' life of lowliness to his exalted existence is effected by his resurrection. A correct understanding of this event is of primary importance for the right evaluation of Jesus' earthly life. In this respect the role of faith must be fully recognised. In Paul's epistles Jesus is explicitly designated as the object of faith, but this transition from the Proclaimer to the Proclaimed is not a deviation, but the fulfilment of Jesus' own intentions.

How is this possible? He concludes by again appealing to Jüngel:

The earthly Jesus appears in a more indirect way in Paul's epistles, in an interpreted form. An indication by Jüngel may prove fruitful: He stresses that Jesus' verbal preaching is always accompanied by his active preaching, which serves as some form of commentary on his words and teaching. His conduct, his authority and his preaching call forth faith and demand a decision regarding himself. After his death, however, this "wordless commentary" no longer existed. The only way in which this could be retained by the apostles was to include the Person of Jesus also in their preaching, to fully explain the significance of his coming, his death and resurrection (1967, 267–273).

Is this in the final instance the reality behind the NT and Biblical texts, in all their complex inter-relationships: the significance of Jesus'

coming, death and resurrection? Does only this insight finally explain the nature of these texts, the communal expectation of the interpretive community, the theological *Ort* where adequate understanding can take place, the proper trajectory, the intended future of these texts, yes, even the reality of these texts, the ontology that they describe and redescribe?

In later years Lategan would often include these convictions concerning the nature of the Biblical texts in his descriptions of integrative hermeneutics, albeit with different terminology, and less explicitly Christological or even theological. In his excellent and comprehensive essay on “Hermeneutics” for *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, for example, he argues that apart from understanding as a universal problem and hermeneutics as a general theory, a particular hermeneutics may become necessary (1992a). Why? Because of the nature of the material to be interpreted and the purpose for which it is done. For Biblical hermeneutics this means that the difference lies, not in different methods and techniques, but in the specific nature of these texts and the interpretive community in which they are read. Biblical texts call for a dynamic communication process of interpretation—“interpretation is essential to discerning the will of God”, in a remarkable turn of phrase.

After the formation of the canon, his argument continues, this need for interpretation remained, and “then the Reformation represented a fundamental change in hermeneutical thinking”—and it is instructive to read how Lategan describes this fundamental change.

Luther’s insistence that the Bible should first of all be understood as the living word (Lat *viva vox*) of God, in which Christ himself is present, reintroduced the existential dimension of the text. The Bible is not a historical document in the first place, but a text for preaching. Philological and historical research should serve this end. The Bible’s central theme is Christ, and from this perspective the rest of Scripture is to be interpreted. Hermeneutics is more than rules or techniques; it concerns the problem of understanding as a whole. Luther’s position had two important consequences: multiplicity of meaning is replaced by the central scopus of the text, and the priority of the Word over against any other authority is confirmed (1992a, 150).

The continuation of his story is especially interesting. With this fundamental change in hermeneutical thought during the Reformation and the insistence that the Bible serves the *viva vox Dei*, heavy responsibility is now placed upon exegesis. The Reformation therefore marks,

he says, the beginning of the intense hermeneutical and exegetical activity that has shaped subsequent hermeneutical developments. He explicitly introduces and discusses four important consequences, related respectively to the historical, existential, structural and pragmatic aspects of the interpretation process. The important point is that these recent developments—with which he has concerned himself so much and which he has continuously attempted to integrate in a comprehensive and responsible framework—all form part of the developments initiated by the Reformation. In other words, they represent the ongoing attempt to practise what the Reformation insisted on, namely reading the Bible as listening to the voice of the living God and his Christ (see already 1987a). It is therefore not surprising that he concludes by affirming that an adequate hermeneutics will concern itself with “the full scope of the problem, including its ontological dimensions” (1992a, 152). However, what kind of reality, what kind of ontology is this? Lategan’s own story becomes all the more intriguing and remarkable.

4. *Following the persuasion of these texts*

Although he does not use the term recently coined by John Webster to describe Karl Barth’s theological project, there can be absolutely no doubt that according to Lategan this reality which the Biblical texts proclaim is a “moral ontology” (Webster 1998). Reading the Bible is indeed for him about “discerning the will of God”. More than most of his peers, in almost defiance of the canons of Biblical scholarship in the guild at that time, and often surprising to his colleagues and friends, Lategan was continuously interested in the ethical thrust of the Biblical documents and traditions. He wrote on Jesus and discipleship (1967); on service (1978b); on the ethics of Galatians (1990a); on Hebrews 2 and contextual theology (1990b); on NT anthropology in a time of reconstruction (1991a); on Romans 13 in *apartheid* (1992e); on freedom and responsibility (1992f); on faith and calling, a very important volume with essays on NT ethical traditions, edited together with Cilliers Breytenbach and with deliberate inter-disciplinary discussion on the implications for South African society at the time (1992g).

Again, this ethical interest is already present, almost as intuition, in much of his earliest work. It is a very important underlying theme

in the doctoral thesis, which he aptly summarises in the fifth thesis which he submitted for his doctoral defence, namely that Paul's references to Jesus contain important ethical information—"die verwysings van Paulus na die aardse lewe van Jesus bevat belangrike gegewens vir die etiek". The exegetical discussions in the dissertation of suffering with Jesus and of the following of Christ document these concerns (1967, 137–143).

In his scholarly work, he would enter into dialogues with many and diverse people, scholars, figures, positions, and even disciplines, clearly in order to understand the implications of his own convictions more adequately and to be able to refine and if necessary defend them publicly with acceptable theoretical arguments. He studied social conflicts, diversity, ethnicity and *apartheid* (1985c; 1986d; 1993b; 1994b; 1998b), he worked on the role of values in divided societies (1986e; 1991d), he got involved in empirical projects on the development of common values in the work place (1998a), he was deeply involved in studies about building democratic conditions and structures (1987b), he has been involved in a variety of projects on social and economic transformation (1989a; 1991c), and many others.

In this respect, Ricoeur clearly played an important role in his thought, and he often paid tribute to this influence (for example also engaging with Ricoeur's later work, 1996c; 1997a).

In drawing together hermeneutics, phenomenology, and structuralism, he displays his ability to mediate between what at first sight seem to be mutually exclusive approaches. But through his theory of the conflict of interpretations, Ricoeur demonstrates that hermeneutical philosophy, more directed toward understanding of the past and its significance for the present, and critical hermeneutics, more directed toward the future and changing the present, are both one-sided when maintained as absolute positions. Ricoeur develops a hermeneutic which grafts an existential interpretation on a structural analysis. He demonstrates how an analysis of the narrative by means of the metaphorical process can open up the world in front of the text (1992a, 150).

It is this world in front of the text that ultimately concerns Lategan—the Biblical texts speak about a world that we may inhabit. They invite, call, challenge us to imagine and re-imagine, also the real world in which we live.

Finally, (these texts) refer to the world in front of itself. The contribution from the structural and historical dimensions converges at this

point to activate the pragmatic potential of the text. The interpreter has to take the real receptors in their existential situations into account. It is in this context that the world of the text plays a mediating role. What the text offers is an alternative way to look at reality, a "proposed world", a world that "we may inhabit" (Ricoeur). Thus the self-understanding of the reader is challenged. Between the horizon of the text and that of the reader a creative tension develops which calls for the affirmation of the *status quo* or for the openness and courage to accept a new self-understanding (1992a, 154).

Lategan developed and articulated these convictions in dialogue with a whole array of communication theories, speech act theories, theories on pragmatics, theories of action and theories on contextuality. They certainly stimulated his well-known interest in reception theories, reader response theories and audience criticism. They most certainly contributed to his later interest in rhetorical studies, which would inspire many colleagues and students. He cooperated with leaders in the field of rhetorical studies and was involved in inviting several of them to South Africa, including Wilhelm Wuellner and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Rhetorical theory helped him to argue that these texts were about persuasion, about power and not only about meaning, about moving people, also moving them into action (1988a; 1992c; 1993c).

In his later contributions on hermeneutics, this rhetorical or communicative perspective always serves as the integral framework. Texts are about communication, and the Biblical texts are about persuasion, "the *kerygmatic* or proclaiming nature of (these texts) presupposes a new event of understanding as the ultimate goal of reading. Although a variety of audiences are possible, it is the interpretive community of believers which constitutes the context for such a reading" (1992a, 153).

Even his recent research in history and historiography should be understood from the same perspective (2001; 2002a; 2002c; 2002d; 2003b; 2004). It is not at all a new interest for him or even new convictions, but truly a return to fundamental insights that he already held during his earliest years, now developed with new theoretical instruments. Again, his argument is the same. Historical memory, he argues, refers to the presentation of the past in order to understand the present and to anticipate the future. Again, all three the aspects are held together, in the human activity of sense making—now developed with the theoretical tools provided for example by

Jörn Rüsen (2002b; 2003a). Historical memory forms part of the wider phenomenon of historical consciousness, the awareness of time and temporality and of the historicity of human existence. Such historical consciousness also mediates between basic values and present day reality, stresses Lategan, functioning as orientation in actual life situations, “it is a consciousness of time where an awareness of the present and future is filtered through the memory of past” (2002d). Like before, he affirms that historical memory is oriented towards the future. Memory can be a tool to re-imagine and reconstruct the future, which is precisely what he could claim earlier about the imaginative power of the Biblical texts, with regard to the future; or—remarkably!—with regard to the “grammar” or the “theology” of Biblical texts:

(In our understanding of them, Biblical texts) become an illustration of Jüngel’s thesis (1969) regarding the priority of possibility over against reality. By their refusal to accept reality as *the* final possibility, these texts redescribe it in terms of a proposed world, opening up new possibilities for existence. The very grammar of concepts involved (in these texts) is embedded in a history of events and behaviour. It is part of the grammar of the concept of “God” that he is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob (Exod 3:6). The final level of reference is therefore that of the entire text as a communicative reality . . . the wider plan of the gospel . . . this *muthos* (Ricoeur’s term), this conceptual network of ideas, corresponds to what is usually called the “theology” of a biblical text. This framework not only gathers the various sub-themes together—but also gives the final direction to the text. By doing so, the proposed world of the text comes into view, a world that readers “might inhabit” and which they may project as their own-most possibilities (1985a, 23–25).

For Lategan, this represents the final phase of the interpretation process where the *Umweg* of the text (via its redescription, its grammar, its theology) leads the readers back again to rejoin “ordinary” reality—certainly not at the point where they started, but placed before concrete options in which the readers now find themselves. The readers have been directed to the future of the text, which leads him to agree with Jüngel’s (later) thesis: “Das ontologisch Positive der Vergänglichkeit ist die Möglichkeit.” True historical interest is not aimed at establishing the pastness of the past, but at discovering its possibilities and finding the courage to realize them anew in the present (1985, 25).

Even more interestingly, perhaps, is the fact that he himself lived and embodied these ethical convictions in a variety of very practical ways—many of them going against the grain of *apartheid* South African society. Many of us vividly remember the evening discussions during annual meetings of the *New Testament Society*, when surprised colleagues wanted to know why on earth he was willing to dirty his hands with party political involvement.

The important point is that these—sometimes seemingly diverse interests, often confusing and even inexplicable to others in the guild—are all expressions of one and the same conviction, namely that the reality behind, in and working through the Biblical documents is a moral reality, a claim on the lives of readers, a calling, opening up new futures. But even this insight does not yet fully capture what has made his conduct and work so surprising and sometimes remarkable when compared to his peers. Something more needs to be pointed out.

5. *Serving these texts' public power*

Lategan was interested in public life. He was always deeply involved, in a wide variety of ways, with public life—with the church and academic theology, yes, but within the academy also with broader issues, with administrative work, inter-disciplinary research, management, and outside the academy with civil society, with political life, including party politics, with the work place, with sport administration, with value formation, with economic theory and the economic sphere, and many others. Many people can witness to their surprise about the remarkable width of his interests and involvements—so why? What was behind this commitment to public life in all its concreteness?

It certainly has to do with his personality and his character, his upbringing and his life story. Others will be more able to bring the pieces of the puzzle together. It is however also true that this obvious trait in his life and work has been totally congruous with his own convictions concerning the nature of the Bible and its message. Again, he made that clear in many of his scholarly publications.

In recent years he often expressed these convictions by referring to the importance of the so-called third public. It is a reference to

David Tracy's well-known distinction between the three publics which theology addresses, namely the church as first public, the academy as second public and society as the third public. It is important that Tracy uses this as part of his description of the social location of theologians (Tracy 1981). These diverse and legitimate social locations always determine who the primary interlocutors of theological work will be. In contributing to this debate, Lategan thus saw himself concerned with understanding the proper task and role of theology. South African theologians indeed needed to take the church and the academy seriously as contexts within which to work and as discussion partners. These contexts provided agendas of relevant issues and challenges as well as applicable modes of discourse and public criteria of credibility and truth for dealing with these issues. Lategan was concerned, however, that theologians should also increasingly take South African society at large seriously. This meant focussing also on its social agendas, employing meaningful and effective modes of public discourse and communicating in terms of the criteria of credibility and truth that are acceptable in this so-called third public of theology (1995b; 1996a).

In his own life he has been doing exactly that. He had been active for many years in the first public of the church, contributing to church debates, developments and documents (see e.g. 1986c). He had been very active in scholarly theology, both in South Africa and internationally, through a wide range of academic activities. It would be a great mistake, however, to assume that he himself only turned his attention to the third public in recent years. He had been concerned with social issues, with public issues in this more common sense of the word, since the earliest years of his academic career. His recent stress on the importance of the third public was not the result of any new discovery on his part, but only the public defence of convictions and concerns that he has shared for many years.

Already in the theses at the time of his doctoral promotion, he defended the views that the church has to help so-called people who have come of age to become mature (XI), that international ecumenical relationships have to be strengthened through better communication (XII), that visible church unity is possible and important (XIII and XV), that indigenous liturgical renewals were necessary in African contexts and churches (XIX)—and remarkably, that the formation of a new economic community in sub-Saharan Africa would have important implications for the church's diaconal task in Africa

and further (XVIII)! All these theses already reflect the passion for a theology and church concerned with the broader public—whether philosophical, ecumenical, international, communicative, indigenous, contextual or economic—challenges and issues. The thesis on the sub-Saharan economic community could just as well have been part of a doctoral defence in 2005!

In recent years, he only increasingly expressed his growing conviction that church, theology and theologians in South Africa are in several ways and for many and complex, also historical, reasons, unable and perhaps unwilling to respond meaningfully and adequately to the challenges and issues of the third public. He is concerned with the seeming “inability to communicate with representatives of civil society in a constructive way” (1995b, 217).

Why is this a concern for Lategan? Could it be because of his fundamental theological intuitions and convictions? Could it be because he has always been convinced that the power of these texts, that the persuasive thrust of the Biblical proclamation, that the intended future of these histories and stories, that the world imaginatively called forth by these trajectories, that the new world which we may inhabit is, in fact, the real world, our world, our present, history, our public life, today, in all its concrete realities? And if this is the real answer to the puzzle of his life and work, then where does this theological intuition, this theological conviction, come from? How can this then be explained?

6. *A readers' reception of Lategan's legacy*

Reformed faith and theology, developing a depiction offered by John Leith, can be described as “a way of being the church in the world, before God” (for an extended argument, in honour of a contemporary of Lategan, see Smit 2002). From that description, *four* characteristics of being Reformed—at least according to the tradition and the original intentions—come to the fore.

Firstly, Reformed Christians see themselves as part of *the* church of the living, Triune God. They regard themselves as Christian, rather than Reformed. They are consciously and very deliberately *ecumenical*, catholic, not sectarian. Secondly, they see themselves as living before the face of God, *coram Deo*, listening to and hearing God's living voice in the Scriptures. Reading, studying, interpreting,

discussing, sharing, commenting and hearing these Scriptures in order to hear this living voice, forms the central piece of Reformed faith, piety and worship. Thirdly, Reformed people strive to *be* this church, to embody, to practice what they hear in these Scriptures. This is in fact the background of the very name “Reformed”—the striving to reform life and practice according to these living Scriptures. That is why ethics, why the Christian life and very practical ecclesiological reflections already formed an essential part of Calvin’s *Institutes*, and why doctrine and ethics, confession and church order, message and formation have always been closely integrated in the Reformed tradition. Finally, this embodiment, practice, and ethics are not restricted to the personal, individual sphere, but on the contrary extend to every sphere of reality and life. The Christian life is a longing for justice, according to Calvin, and it involves the whole range of public human activities and responsibilities. That is why notions like sanctification, obedience, discipleship and vocation play such central roles in Reformed faith and thought.

This clearly means that not every church that calls itself Reformed is truly Reformed, or every theologian coming from the Reformed community and tradition thinks according to the Reformed faith. In fact, *apartheid* South Africa was a dramatic demonstration how Reformed churches can fail the Reformed faith and tradition. It is sadly even possible to argue that precisely these four characteristics of the Reformed faith were at risk during the past decades, that they were denied so often in the name of being Reformed, that the Reformed tradition has lost its credibility and liberating power (De Gruchy 1991)—and that being Reformed, according to many in South Africa, means precisely the opposite from what it is supposed to mean!

In all four respects, one could argue, a caricature of being Reformed is today rejected, by many. They think that being Reformed is sectarian (and unwilling to be part of the ecumenical Christian community), that it is self-assured and arrogant (and unwilling to listen anew and in listening, to learn and confess its weaknesses before God), that it is rigid (and unwilling to change, to confess and to transform), and that it is apathetic and uninvolved (and unconcerned with public life and human suffering and need)—all four radical misunderstandings of the tradition, probably caused by false claims made in the name of the Reformed tradition over many years.

It is even plausible to argue that precisely these four issues have been—and still are—at stake in South Africa over the past decades.

The major theological debates concerned firstly the unity of the church; secondly, the nature, authority and responsible reading of Scripture; thirdly, the thrust of these Scriptures towards confession, embodiment, the Christian life, ethics and renewal and transformation; and finally, the public implications of these convictions, for the whole of human life, history, reality, yes, the world.

It is obvious how deeply Bernard Lategan was involved in all four these debates, and how the remarkable features of his own life and work—briefly reminded of in the foregoing—precisely correlate with these four challenges, namely his commitment to ecumenicity, to the living voice of the Biblical texts, to their persuasive, moving, life-changing thrust, and to their public, yes, world-transformative scope.

Is it, therefore, perhaps also plausible to conclude that Lategan was nothing else than a Reformed theologian at work? That his deepest intuitions and theological convictions have only been the basic characteristics of the Reformed faith and tradition? That would certainly explain much of the appreciation and respect which he enjoys in church and theological circles, both ecumenical and Reformed. Many theological students, ministers, theologians and believers probably recognized in his work, almost anonymously, convincing, persuasive, wise and authoritative discussions of precisely what they themselves believed. But why then would he so often do this almost anonymously?

In his pleas for theology taking the third public seriously, Lategan often argued explicitly that theology “needs to transcend itself in the sense that it becomes *anonymous*” (his own italics). He also describes this kind of theology as camouflaged (following Tracy) or secular—“a discourse no longer formulated in recognisable theological language, but effectively translating theological concepts in a public discourse accessible to participants from other discourses, and in a form that is genuinely ‘public’”. According to him, this kind of anonymous, camouflaged, secular theology “could contribute to the development of a functional public ethos and a healthy civil society, in a way that is critical to what is happening in our country, and worthy of serious attention” (1995b, 228; 1996a, 146; that not everyone would agree that the language should be anonymous is obvious, cf. e.g. the challenging hermeneutical essays in Webster 2001, 9–112).

According to many readers of his life and work, this is precisely how we have received it over the last years. This is why he enjoys our deepest respect and gratitude. Perhaps he may not recognize

himself in this widespread readers' response—as one of the leading Reformed theologians during the dark and difficult years in South Africa's recent past—but then he himself often warned against the intentional fallacy. Proper understanding of any text and its reception requires more than the author's own conscious intentions. What he meant to so many of us in church and theology is perhaps more for us to say than for him. Perhaps he did not even always know what he was doing.

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THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND THE LETTERS OF PAUL: REVISITING BERNARD C. LATEGAN'S THESIS

G. Francois Wessels

ABSTRACT

Jesus and Paul: what was the relationship between these two influential Jews? No historical relationship, said Rudolf Bultmann. Paul never saw Jesus, never seemed to inquire about the Jesus tradition from his disciples and never referred to the historical Jesus as an example (only to the pre-existent Christ, e.g. Phil 2:5; 2 Cor 8:9; Rom 15:3). What mattered to Paul was only the fact that "Jesus was born and lived under the law as a Jew" (Bultmann 1977, 190). And of course, that was to be understood: directive and formative for the early Christian community was not the historical Jesus, but the proclaimed Christ—according to Bultmann. There was a continuity between Jesus and Paul, said Bultmann, but not a historical continuity, only a material continuity.

This he could never understand of his great teacher, responded Ernst Käsemann, this "merkwürdig radikale Antithese von historischer und sachlicher Kontinuität zwischen Jesus und der urchristlichen Verkündigung . . ." (1970a, 42). That is why the quest for the historical Jesus could never be given up, Käsemann pleaded. There had to be a quest, because history matters. There had to be some historical continuity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith—and, for the same reason, if there was a material continuity between Jesus and Paul, Käsemann was convinced that there also had to be some historical continuity between the two most influential figures in early Christianity.

1. *Unity and multiplicity, continuity and discontinuity*

The debate about the Jesus-Paul relationship is at the same time a debate about continuity and discontinuity, unity and multiplicity in early Christianity. This Käsemann forcefully demonstrated when he was asked to address the World Council of Churches' (WCC) Fourth World Conference for Faith and Order on 16 July 1963 in Toronto on the "Unity and multiplicity in the New Testament doctrine of

the church" (reprinted as 1970b). We may assume that the expectation of many attending the conference of that ecumenical body was that somehow this learned NT scholar would provide some affirmation for what was then a main goal of the World Council—to build unity among the world's churches. Käsemann told the WCC that the NT did not affirm the unity of the church, but rather reflected the 20th century church's lack of unity—what Käsemann called "multiplicity".

Käsemann's intention was not to legitimize the lack of unity among churches; on the contrary, he wanted the multiplicity of NT communities to be acknowledged, so that a false sense of unity could be exposed, hoping that in the same process, a deeper and more real unity within the multiplicity could be discovered. The false, superficial unity among NT voices was, for Käsemann, in particular represented by the second generation of NT writers which reflected a Christianity reinforced by religious enthusiasm or a Christianity supported by legalism and structures of authority. These types of Christianity, Käsemann contended, are well represented in the NT. The discerning reader should therefore read the NT as a collection of responses to the ministry and life of Jesus. They represent a variety of possibilities of how the community of followers of Jesus could exist in the world—but not all of the possibilities reflected in the NT are equally deserving. "Einseitigkeiten, Erstarrungen, Fiktionen und kontradiktorische Gegensätze der Lehre, Organisation und Frömmigkeit haben im Feld neutestamentlicher Ekklesiologie nicht weniger Platz als bei uns" (Käsemann 1970b).

This multiplicity in types of early Christianity should be recognised, Käsemann argued—but that does not mean there was in early Christianity no centre holding together the centrifugal forces. There was such a centre: the proclamation of Jesus and its continuation in Paul. There existed a material continuity between Jesus and Paul, and that in itself was an indication of a historical continuity.

That debate concerning continuity and discontinuity continues today, probably in a more vigorous manner than before. Many scholars argue strongly that in first-century Christianity there was no centre holding forces together. There was no continuity from Jesus through the Jesus traditions, the earliest Christian groups, to Paul. There was (it is said) only discontinuity. Just as there were not only one Judaism with different parties, but different and contending Judaisms, so there were, in the first century, not one Christianity

with different emphases, but different and contending Christianities.¹

Today it is clear that the Jesus-Paul relationship has much wider ideological repercussions than unity and multiplicity in the Christian church. A Jesus versus Paul antithesis plays an important part in today's cultural discourses. In her book *The First Christian*, Karen Armstrong makes a sharp distinction between Jesus, the Jewish reformer-prophet and Paul, "the first Christian". Jesus brought the world a simple, sincere and demanding ethos whereas Paul introduced an obsession with sin, guilt and a negative attitude towards women, sexuality and the human body. Jesus promoted inclusiveness and affirmation of life, Paul promoted authoritarianism, patriarchy and world-negation. Many Jewish people regard Jesus as one of the greatest God-fearing Jews—who, against his intention, was transformed into a Gentile God.²

¹ According to John Dominic Crossan (in a discussion at the Faculty of Theology, University of Stellenbosch, August 2002), there were four types of early Christianity, whose understanding of Jesus, themselves and God's revelation differed quite radically from one another. There was *Thomas Christianity*, named after the Gospel of Thomas: an early group who remembered the sayings of Jesus (not the deeds), and shared the Gospel of Thomas' early Christian gnosticism. The sayings of Jesus were important to them, not his deeds. They were opposed to any apocalyptic expectations, and did not expect a future end themselves. *Pauline Christianity* takes its name from the apostle Paul. As for Paul himself, the death and resurrection of Jesus were of central importance for this group. They emphasized the mode, not just the fact, of Jesus' death: hence the folly of preaching the cross. *Q Christianity* is named after the hypothetical Q source. Like the Thomas Christians, the deeds of Jesus were less important to them than his words. The Q source was to them not just a list of Jesus sayings, an addendum to the other gospels; it was the gospel: the good news about Jesus. They embraced the wise sayings of Jesus, as well as the open commensality, which Jesus demonstrated in his open meal fellowship. Some of them wandered about as itinerant preachers-teachers, spreading the wisdom of Jesus, words which often had a counter-cultural edge. The death and alleged resurrection of Jesus played no part in their religion. Lastly, there was *Exegetical Christianity*, consisting of a group with scribal learning and the ability to manipulate scriptural texts to contribute to an early apologetic. They wrote the passion and resurrection narratives, "not as history remembered, but prophecy historicized" (Wright 1996, 63). It is argued that the differences between these four groups, if they existed in the manner portrayed, were so great that it was very unlikely that they could be reconciled or convinced that they belonged to the same religious group.

² The idea that Paul was the real founder of Christianity, has a long history. In his doctoral dissertation (1967) Lategan shows how the assumption that Paul introduced a "foreign element" into whatever Jesus tradition he received, governed scholars from many schools during the early part of the 20th century. The key to understanding Paul, said Heitmüller in 1912, is the syncretistic Hellenistic environment in which he grew up. Before Paul became a follower of Jesus, said Wrede in 1904, he already believed in the concept of a "Himmelwesen", which he probably

For many Western intellectuals, Paul is on trial for turning the simple ethical religion of Jesus into a religion of sin and guilt. The discussion whether there is a continuity between Jesus and Paul is therefore relevant not only for the writing of the history of early Christianity but also for the shaping of future societies of peace and tolerance. For that reason, says Wenham (1995, 9), some see Paul as the one who complicated and spoiled the simple religion of Jesus, to which a mature, 21st century may now have the courage to return. Casey (1991, 178) suggests: "If Christianity is to remain a viable option for honest and well-informed people, it should surely undo that process of development, and emerge as something nearer to the religion of Jesus of Nazareth."

2. *Why did Paul not refer to Jesus' life and teaching more often?*

If it is true, as most scholars agree, that Jesus the Christ was the focal point of Paul's message, why is there so *little biographical detail about Jesus* in the letters? Why so few *direct references to Jesus* in Paul's letters? Paul frequently refers to Jesus' death and his resurrection, but as for Jesus' birth, baptism, miracles, transfiguration, not much

picked up from apocalyptic Jewish circles. Yes, Paul started as a Jew, said Reitzenstein in 1909, but he ended as a Gnostic. In between lies his experience of the Eastern mystery religions. As a result of that, Paul interpreted Jesus' words spoken at the last Passover meal in terms of the dying and rising motif of some mystery religions. Early Christianity, according to Wilhelm Bousset in his influential *Kyrios Christos* (1921), went through two important developments: at first, the earliest Christian communities in Palestine regarded Jesus as an exalted figure, modelled on the "son of man" figure (which Bousset supposed was a well-known title for a widely expected apocalyptic figure in Judaism). In a second stage of development, there arose in the "Hellenistic Gentile" communities a new view of Jesus as divine Kyrios, a view influenced by pagan analogies of divine heroes and cult deities. Paul was converted during this second stage, living in a Hellenistic environment. He became convinced that Jesus was such a divine figure—even more than that. In a world of kurioi, Paul portrayed Jesus as the Lord of lords, because he was filled with the supernatural pneuma, spirit. In this development, the historical Jesus had very little, if any influence. The mould into which Bousset fitted Jesus, however, did not come from the historical Jesus, but from the kurios-figure Paul adopted from Hellenistic syncretism.

Jewish scholars had a different answer to the question, How did it happen that a Jew, a rabbi trained by Pharisees, forsook his Jewish heritage to found a new religion? They agreed with the *religionsgeschichtliche* school of Bousset: there had to be an external factor causing Paul to go beyond the boundaries of Judaism. They disagreed about what this external factor might be. Josef Klausner thought it to be a psychological process in Paul himself, for which Paul was prepared by the influence of

is said (Wenham 1995, 3). Why are there “no details about Jesus’ birth, no direct mention of Jesus’ teaching or healing ministry, no confession at Caesarea Philippi, no transfiguration, no cleansing of the Temple, no conflict with the authorities, no Gethsemane scene, no trial, no thieves crucified with Jesus, no last words from the cross, no soldiers, no weeping women, no word about the place or time of crucifixion, no mention of Joseph or Mary, or of John the baptizer, or of Judas, or of Pilate” (Furnish 1989, 43)?

James Dunn was of the opinion that the consensus still maintained “that Paul knew or cared little about the ministry of Jesus apart from his death and resurrection”. The reason for that, according to Dunn, was not hard to find: apart from three instances (1 Cor 7:10–11: “not I but the Lord”; 1 Cor 9:14: “the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel”; and 1 Cor 11:23–25: “I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you”) Paul “never refers to Jesus’ teaching as such or cites Jesus as his authority” (Dunn 1994, 155).

This paucity is all the more troubling, if we remember the eagerness of Paul’s contemporaries, for example Jewish rabbis or Hellenistic philosophers, to support their teaching with appeals to the sayings and lives of their teachers (Wedderburn 1989, 100). Within early Christianity, we find the same awareness that biographical information about the founder of their religion is important, as amongst the later gospel writers (Burridge 1992, 144). In this context, it is indeed striking that Paul makes no attempt to bolster arguments in his letters by referring to explicit sayings or deeds of Jesus. “Why did Paul not cite Jesus as his authority on more occasions, since an exhortation attributed to Jesus would presumably carry more weight with his readers?” asks Dunn (1994, 156).

mystery religions in the Jewish Diaspora, and triggered by him being present at the crucifixion and at Stephen’s martyrdom and culminated in his Damascus experience.

Leo Back blamed Paul’s deviation on the Hellenistic mysticism of the Diaspora. Despite the differences among the above-mentioned scholars, the point that should not be missed is the fact that all of these interpretations rested on the assumption that there was little historical connection between Paul and the Jesus tradition. In the beginning, Paul’s portrayal as a Hellenist, a mystic or a Gnostic functioned to explain why he had little contact with and placed little value in the Jesus tradition. Few questioned the validity of this assumption—and it was clear why. It was the cornerstone of the different theories of what “external factor” influenced Paul to turn away from Judaism. In fact, Wrede said in so many words that the founding of Christianity only took place because Paul had little or no contact with the historical Jesus.

In addition, Walter finds it remarkable that when Paul is expounding the central content of his message, "he adduces no Jesus-tradition". When making important Christological or soteriological statements, "Paul shows no trace of the influence of the theologically central affirmations of Jesus' preaching" (1989, 63). The question why he did not refer to Jesus is intensified by the fact that we know that Paul knew *some* synoptic tradition (as demonstrated, for example, by 1 Cor 7). If Paul knew more of the synoptic tradition, why did he not use that tradition? Why did he not refer to more sayings of Jesus?

On the other hand, some scholars have always maintained that, for those who have eyes to see, there are many more references to Jesus' life and words than are observed at first glance. As to what precisely should be recognised as references to Jesus' life and words, there is a great variety of opinions, from a multitude (Resch in 1904 knew of more than a 1 000) to only two or three (Walter 1984; Neiryck 1986). Some scholars refer to these as maximalist and minimalist positions.

How is such a discrepancy possible? The main reason is that there are different kinds of references: firstly, direct references, in which Paul consciously quoted or referred to Jesus' words or examples; and secondly, indirect references, where we have words of Paul resembling words of Jesus.

2.1. *Direct references*

Does Paul quote any sayings of Jesus? There is wide although not complete agreement that there are in the Pauline corpus only two sayings in which Paul seems to consciously quote sayings of Jesus. The first is found in 1 Cor 7:10, where Paul writes: "To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): a wife must not separate from her husband . . . and a husband must not divorce his wife." The second we find in 1 Cor 9:14: "In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." This can be contrasted to 1 Cor 7:12, where Paul writes: "To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): if any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her." The fact that Paul makes the distinction between something which he says on the authority of the Lord (which can only refer to Jesus) and something of which he is convinced but

nevertheless admit that he has no word of the Lord on, must surely be an indication that Paul consciously quoted the words of Jesus in 1 Cor 7:10 and 9:14.

But even these two apparent clear references to sayings of Jesus are disputed as conscious quotations. Neirynck (1986, 320) argues that even though Paul refers to "the command" from Jesus against divorce, he allows divorce in case of a believer and an unbeliever (1 Cor 7:15). In 1 Cor 9:14 Paul feels himself free not to make use of the command of the Lord that those who preach the gospel should be remunerated.

These objections are not supported by many scholars. The reason for allowing divorce in 1 Cor 7:15 is clear: it concerns a couple where one is not a believer and not committed to the command from Jesus. The command to remunerate a preacher of the gospel is not affected by Paul not making use of that right. The command was that remuneration should be offered; the receiver retained the right to use or not use the right to receive or not to receive the remuneration. It seems therefore safe to conclude that Paul did consciously quote Jesus in 1 Cor 7:10 and 1 Cor 9:14.

In 1 Cor 11:23–25 Paul quotes the words of Jesus at the last supper: "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'" This seems to be clearly an explicit and conscious quotation of Jesus' words, but for Neirynck, who probably offers the most detailed argument for a minimalist position, Paul's quotation from the last supper-tradition does not qualify as such, "since 1 Cor 11:23–25 is a quotation of a liturgical tradition" (1986, 277). Why being part of a liturgical tradition is a disqualification, Neirynck does not explain. It could be argued, as Walter does, that 1 Cor 11:23–25 came to Paul via a liturgical or catechetical route, which would mean that Paul did not necessarily know the passion narrative that the synoptic gospels later used. But even if Paul knew what happened at the last supper from liturgical tradition, it means he knew basically what happened.

Second Cor 12:9 ("But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you'") and 1 Thess 4:15 ("According to the Lord's own word, we tell you who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, it will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep") are in a category of their own. Paul clearly here refers not to words the earthly Jesus spoke, but words the risen Christ communicated

to Paul, prophetic application by Paul of existing Jesus material (Stuhlmacher 1983, 243).³

2.2. *Indirect references to Jesus' life or words*

It is in the category of indirect references—what some scholars call parallels, allusions to or echoes of Jesus—that the opinions differ greatly. We are thinking of statements of Paul, which are not directly attributed to Jesus, but show a similarity with some sayings of Jesus. Here is much room to differ, because what one scholar may see as a remarkable parallel, another may take to be a mere coincidence.⁴ Another problem is: What does a parallel between a phrase in a Pauline letter and, say, the synoptic gospels, tell us? That Paul used a phrase that originated with Jesus? Or that the synoptic gospels, which were compiled decades after Paul wrote his letters, took over a “Jesus phrase” from Paul? Or does a parallel simply point to a common, probably oral, Christian tradition about Jesus? Let us briefly examine some of the evidence. First, Paul’s reference to the second table of the Torah in Rom 13:8–10: “Whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself . . . therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.’” Second, Gal 5:14, which resembles even closer the words of Jesus in Mark 12:31 on the two greatest commandments: “The entire law is summed up in a single command: “‘Love your neighbour as your-

³ Paul himself did not make a distinction between the identity of the historical Jesus and the risen Christ, but we do that, in order to seek to establish whether Paul knew and passed on sayings that came directly from Jesus.

⁴ As said above, on this point opinions diverge greatly. In 1904 Resch discovered 1 096 parallels between Jesus in the synoptic gospels and the Pauline letters. Davies (1948, with additions in 1970) formulated a detailed argument, with many examples, that “it was the words of Jesus Himself that formed Paul’s primary source in his work as ethical didaskalos” (1970, 136). Stanley (1961) still argued for a number of allusions in Paul, but Furnish (1964; reprint 1989) forcefully argued that the search for parallels would not help establish the continuity between Jesus and Paul, but only what others called the material continuity between Jesus and Paul. In 1967 Lategan’s dissertation was published, on which the present essay will comment. Dungan (1971) argued that Paul used pre-synoptic material. Fjärstedt (1974) found many connections between 1 Cor 1–4 and 9 and the synoptic tradition. Quite independently, Fraser confirmed Fjärstedt’s findings in his *Jesus and Paul: Paul As Interpreter of Jesus from Harnack to Kümmel* (1974). So did Bruce (1974; 1975), as well as Hengel (1975). In 1982 Allison compiled the results of these studies, together with his own research, arguing that the Jesus tradition circulated in small blocks from a very early time, and that Paul knew and used some of these blocks,

self.” Even the usually sceptical Neirynck (1986, 271) admits that Paul here repeats a saying of Jesus, but argues that this does not demonstrate for certain that Paul had access to a collection of Jesus sayings.

Other evidence is the cluster of sayings in Romans 12:

12:14: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them” (which reminds one of Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount, Matt 5:44: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”).

12:17: “Do not repay evil for evil” (cf. Matt 5:39: “Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also”).

12:18–21: “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone . . . Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath . . . If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink” (cf. Matt 5:44: “Love your enemies”).

The verbal parallels are not sufficiently close to convince Wenham (1995, 252) that Paul knew the Sermon on the Mount, but some continuity is difficult to deny. Romans 12:14 is of special interest. Apart from the distinctly Jewish “bless you”, the thought of returning

e.g. Mark 9:33–50; Luke 6:27–38; 10:2–16; and a passion narrative. Stuhlmacher (1983) agreed in principle with Allison, but thought Allison saw too easily parallels where there was none. But from 1984 the tide seemed to turn: studies more sceptical about the parallels between Jesus (or the Jesus tradition) and Paul started to appear. In a *Festschrift* for F. W. Beare the editors expressed the view that the articles “demonstrate that no satisfactory solution has yet been found to the Jesus-Paul question” (Richardson and Hurd 1984, xv). Walter (1985; reprint 1989) formulated a minimalist position, which saw only a minimum of Jesus sayings used by Paul. Neirynck (1986) concludes that only 1 Cor 7:10–11 and 9:14 are clear references to Jesus, and states that “elsewhere in the Pauline letters there is no certain trace of a conscious use of sayings of Jesus” (1986, 320). From 1983 to 1987 the SNTS held a series of Paul and Jesus seminars at its regular conferences. Some of these papers were collected by Wedderburn in the volume *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays*. Although minimalists (like Walter) put forward a strong case at these SNTS seminars for the minimum of Jesus sayings directly referred to or indirectly alluded to by Paul, others (like Wedderburn) pleaded for a continuity between Jesus and Paul on other grounds than parallel sayings. It may even be that, as far as Pauline allusions to Jesus are concerned, the list seems to be growing rather than shrinking. In 1964 Furnish could think of a collection of only seven, which he thought to be “a very subjective and therefore problematic enterprise” (1989, 44). Later, Dunn (1994, 161–168) regarded eight as possible echoes, a list which in 2003 he enlarged to 15 “most striking” allusions (2003, 182). Kim’s list of possible echoes numbered 31 (2002, 272). Recently, the most comprehensive and persuasive case for a material and historical continuity between Jesus and Paul has been made by Wenham (1995).

blessing for cursing is a distinctly Christian adjustment of the traditional *lex talionis* assumption that God will curse those who curse his people (Dunn 1994, 162). If we take into consideration that the saying is not characteristic of Paul (he nowhere else uses *καταράσθαι*, “curse”) and since we know Jesus used it, it would be very difficult to attribute this saying to anyone else than Jesus (Dunn 1994, 162).⁵ Even though Paul does not mention Jesus here and it may even be possible that he was not aware that Jesus once said those words, the historical and material continuity between Jesus and Paul is clear.

We find a similar cluster of sayings in 1 Cor 4:11–13: “To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags . . . When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly” (cf. Matt 5:6, 11: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness . . . Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you . . .”). Here is clearly a connection to the tradition of Jesus sayings, minimalist Walter (1989, 56) agrees,⁶ but he points out that we cannot be sure that Paul used these words consciously as words of Jesus. Wolff (1989, 156) disagrees, and argues that Paul in 1 Cor 4 sees his sufferings as “analogous to those of Jesus”. But even if Wolff was wrong and Walter right (i.e. that we do not know if Paul knew that he was referring to the words of Jesus), it does not really matter. The issue at stake is not whether Paul consciously used Jesus’ words, but whether there was continuity between the teachings of Jesus and Paul. If Paul’s exhortation is permeated with the sayings of Jesus—even at points where he is unaware of it—it indeed bears evidence that there was such continuity.

There are a number of other texts that may be allusions or echoes of Jesus in Paul’s letters. We cannot deal with them in detail here. Some are more convincing than others, for instance:

1 Thess 5:15: “Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other”; which resembles Matt 5:38: “If someone strikes you on the right cheek . . .” The fact that Paul here repeats his exhortation of Rom 12:17, using almost “identical phraseology”, may indicate that the phraseology is traditionally Jewish,

⁵ Wenham (1985, 16): “. . . it is entirely likely that the phrase was well-known in the church precisely because it was known to derive from Jesus.”

⁶ As do most commentaries, see Käsemann (1974), Cranfield (1979), Ridderbos (1977) and Lategan (1967, 185).

but Wenham (1995, 252) thinks that Jesus is more directly influenced by Jesus' version of that Jewish tradition, as attested in Matt 5:38.

Rom 16:19: "I would have you wise as to what is good and guileless as to what is evil"; which reminds one of Jesus' words in Matt 10:16: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

Rom 13:6–7: "Give everyone what you owe him: if you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour"; which reminds us of Jesus' answer recorded in Mark 12:17 to the question whether taxes should be paid to Caesar: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."

Here it is clear that there is a common Jesus/Paul tradition, even if we cannot be sure that Paul consciously quoted a saying of Jesus. The point is illustrated by Rom 14:14: "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself"; which reminds one of Jesus' words in Mark 7:14: "Hear me . . . there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him." Does Paul's specific mention of the name Jesus, instead of simply using his usual expression "in the Lord" suggest that Paul wanted to make the point that this is a saying of Jesus, rather than a general Christian saying (Stanley 1961, 28)? No, argues Walter (1989, 57), Paul here clearly thinks of a general Christian saying which "seems to him a necessary corollary of his gospel of Christ". Wedderburn (1989, 131) agrees, making the point that the continuity between the Jesus tradition in Mark 7 and Paul's reference in Rom 14:14 is not to be found in a conscious quotation of a Jesus' saying, but in the fact that in Mark 7 and in Romans 14 both Jesus and Paul emphasise "an openness to the outsider, and that in the name of their God".

Other so-called Pauline allusions to Jesus are less clear. Allison (1982, 271) put forward the theory that a pre-Markan Jesus tradition circulated in small blocks and that these blocks were known by Paul: Mark 9:33–50; Luke 6:27–38; 10:2–16; and a passion narrative. The first block may serve as an example: Mark 9:42 ("And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin [σκανδαλίσῃ], it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large milestone tied around his neck") is said to be reflected in Rom 14:13b ("Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block [σκάνδαλον] or obstacle in your brother's way") and in 1 Cor 8:13 ("Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin [σκανδαλίζει], I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall [σκανδαλίσω]").

To a great degree Allison's argument rests on the occurrence of the verb σκανδαλίζω or the noun σκάνδαλον in all these references, which does not really convince. Besides, Neiryneck built a strong case against the existence of a definable pre-Markan tradition. The supposed dependence of other allusions rests on formal, verbal parallels which could hardly have been expressed differently—like 2 Cor 1:17, where Paul assures his readers that he does not say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” in the same breath; and Matt 5:37, where Jesus says, “Let your word be ‘Yes, yes’, or ‘No, no’” (Wenham 1995, 27). These parallels are not really convincing evidence of a continuous link between Jesus and Paul.

However, even if this last category of parallels is not convincing, there are—as shown above—enough reminiscences, words of the Lord, and sayings parallel to that of Jesus to convince a reasonable investigator of a strong material continuity between Jesus and Paul. The question is: is the material continuity a proof of a historical continuity?

It would be difficult, if not impossible to answer yes if “proof” is understood in an exact, positivistic manner. In that sense, we cannot deduce, with absolute certainty, from two authors saying more or less the same thing, but not using the exact same words, a historical continuity, in the sense that the last author received that which was said from the earlier author or speaker, directly or indirectly. We can only note a high degree of probability. The more words and phrases are used by both, the higher the probability of a historical continuity. At the same time it should be kept in mind that the opposite is just as difficult—to be positively certain that there is no historical link between two authors who do not use the exact same words, but express the same thought, with some of the same words used by both. And of course, the more identical words and phrases are used by both, the more difficult it becomes to explain the material continuity without any historical continuity.

Bernard Lategan argued the case that a substantial material continuity does require a historical continuity in his doctoral dissertation on *Die aardse Jesus in die prediking van Paulus, volgens sy briewe* [*The earthly Jesus in the preaching of Paul, according to his letters*], published in 1967. Lategan was strengthened in his conviction by what he learnt from the way Jewish tradition was passed on. The phenomenon itself implies a “certain historical continuity” (1967, 164). The passing on of tradition necessitates that giver and receiver have direct contact.

Careful preservation of material passed is assumed. Verbal differences where there are material agreement pose no insurmountable problem, because Gerhardsson (1961, 303) convinced Lategan (1967, 188) that in the passing on of oral tradition in Judaism, improvisation is not out of place.

Lategan argued (1967, 188), for example, that the phrase τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ in Gal 6:2 (“Bear one another’s burden and so fulfil the law of Christ”), captures this improvisation; the phrase is not simply a call to behave in a general Christian manner. It refers to the interpretation and the application of the Torah, in a different and in altered circumstances, following the guidelines supplied by the historical Jesus. Following W. D. Davies and C. H. Dodd on the exegesis of this verse, Lategan explained the “law of Christ” as “a fixed and authoritative code of conduct for the Christian life, built around a core of collected Jesus sayings” (1967, 189).⁷ Paul might not have known as much about the words and deeds of Jesus as later Christian communities who produced the gospels, but indications are that he knew more than a cursory reading than his letters might lead one to believe. Yes, in Paul’s letters the focus is on the death and resurrection of Jesus. That is “why the earthly Jesus appears in a more indirect way in Paul’s epistles, while on the other hand it is clear that this earthly Jesus is of fundamental importance⁸ for his proclamation” (Lategan 1967, 273).

⁷ There has been quite a debate about the meaning of τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Gal 6:2 is the only place where Paul uses the phrase, which suggests that Paul acquired it from someone else. Räisänen (1992, 182) suggests that the phrase was used by Paul’s opponents in Galatia, and that Paul got it from them, implying that Paul did not really use the phrase voluntarily. Against that, Wenham (1995, 257) thinks Paul got the phrase from the Jesus tradition. He notes that in John’s Gospel Jesus speaks of “my commandment” (13:34; 15:12 and 17; 1 John 4:11). Both Paul and John use the phrase to refer to a command to love one another. This could be sheer coincidence, but Wenham thinks “it is more likely that Paul and John know the same tradition. Paul speaks (atypically) of ‘the law of Christ’ because the tradition emphasized that this was Jesus’ commandment” (1995, 257).

⁸ What about the enigmatic expression in 2 Cor 5:16: “From now on, therefore, we regard [or: know] no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view [κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν], we regard [or: know] him thus no longer”? Is Paul saying that he no longer knows Christ as a historical person? No. The phrase κατὰ σάρκα qualifies not the noun “Christ”, but the mode of knowing or regarding. Paul says that they (i.e. himself and his readers) once regarded people, including Christ, in “fleshly”, i.e. distorted manner. Now they do not regard any in a “fleshly” manner—because he and his readers are now

3. *Is the Jesus-Paul continuity only found in ethical paraenesis?*

We may therefore, with good reason, conclude that there is indeed a material and a historical continuity between Jesus and Paul—not so much demonstrated by Paul consciously quoting or referring to a saying of Jesus (Neiryneck offers a detailed argument that only 1 Cor 7:10–11 and 9:14 qualify as direct references), but by the many indications of a common tradition (written or oral) between Jesus as he appears in the synoptic gospels and Paul's letters. However, even those who recognise the many allusions to and echoes of Jesus in the Pauline letters, have an objection: the continuity between Paul and Jesus, they say, is found not in those places in Paul's letters where he expounds "the central content of his gospel, in making important Christological or soteriological statements" (Walter 1989, 63). The main stock of demonstrable material from the Jesus-tradition, says Walter (1989, 68) "occurs in connection with *ethical paraenesis*". The implied argument behind this seems to suggest that the continuity between Jesus and Paul is not in matters which are central in Paul's theology, but on the periphery, namely ethics.

This objection does not really hold water, for several reasons:

In the first place, the main stock but not everything of the material common to Jesus and Paul appears in ethical paraenesis. Take, for example, *Abba*, the word used to address God in prayer (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15). Why does Paul quote "father" in the Aramaic? Because this is a word which in its Aramaic form became so much part of Christianity since its earliest, Aramaic-speaking stages, that it was adopted by later Greek-speaking Christians as one of the key words in the worship of God. Paul is certainly drawing directly or indirectly on a very early Jesus tradition (Wenham 1995, 27; Walter 1989, 59) which is not part of ethical exhortation, but a reflection of the way early Christians approached God.

Neither is Paul's remark an exhortation in 1 Cor 13:2: "And if I have . . . all faith, so as to remove mountains . . ."; which reminds

"in Christ", and "if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old (manner of regarding) has passed away, behold, the new has come" (v. 17). For a confirmation of Lategan's exegesis, see Wolff (1989a, 88). According to Wedderburn (1989, 99), "most now agree [that Paul in 2 Cor 5:16 repudiates] a flesh-dominated . . . knowledge of any person, including Christ. . . this verse does not mean that Paul . . . is not interested in the knowledge of Jesus 'in the flesh'". In agreement are Fraser (1974, 48–60), Wright (1992, 408) and Wenham (1995, 401).

one of Jesus' words in Matt 17:20: "For truly I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there', and it will move". Again the resemblance is apparent. Paul says nothing about Jesus, and there was a similar Jewish proverb which could have inspired Paul, but Dunn (1994, 163) thinks the probability is much greater that Paul received this saying from the Jesus tradition, either as a "Christian" saying or as a saying of Jesus. Again, it does not matter that there is no direct reference to Jesus. The point is that it confirms continuity—historical and material—in matters not strictly ethical.

The same goes for Paul's reminder of the second coming in 1 Thess 5:2 ("The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night") which resembles Luke 12:39–40 ("If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming . . . You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him"). Although the wording is not close, the imagery of the day of the Lord coming like a thief in the night is well represented in the Jesus tradition. Jesus was remembered as often giving similar warnings. The most obvious deduction is that there was a "well known tradition in at least many churches of Jesus having given such a warning" (Dunn 1994, 163). Even Walter, who holds a mild minimalist position, agrees: "It can assuredly also be assumed that at least in 5:2–3 Paul takes up sayings from the Jesus-tradition" (Walter 1989, 67).

These examples demonstrate the point that though it may be difficult to find in Paul's letters direct quotations from Jesus, many of the echoes and allusions go either back to words of Jesus himself, or to the Jesus tradition—Jesus as he was remembered by the early Christians. These echoes confirm the continuity between Jesus and Paul—and that this continuity is not only confined to ethical paraenesis.

In the second place, it is anachronistic to expect Paul to use the sayings of Jesus "in support of his central Christological and soteriological statements" (Walter 1989, 74). Paul's Christology and soteriology are to a large extent based and shaped by the death and resurrection of Jesus, to which the earthly Jesus could not refer to in his teachings. The one statement in the synoptic gospels which does refer to Jesus' death in a soteriological fashion (Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many") does closely resemble Paul's theology. If it is not an authentic saying of Jesus, it shows at

least the similarity between Paul and the early Jesus tradition.⁹ If is an authentic saying of Jesus, as Wolff (1989, 158) thinks it is, it is indeed strong evidence for a material continuity between the historical Jesus and Paul. If we accept that the historical Jesus at the last Passover meal gave some soteriological meaning to his coming death (as some articulate scholars¹⁰ do) and we compare his last supper words in the synoptic tradition with Paul's account in 1 Cor 11:23–25, the case for a continuity—material and historical—between the historical Jesus and Paul is strengthened.

In the third place, it is true that Paul makes little in his letters of (a) Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, (b) Jesus' miracles and parables, (c) the confrontations with the teachers of the law and (d) the passion narrative, found in all four Biblical gospels. The most logical explanation for this phenomenon seems to be that Paul did not have access to this material, which would not be a surprise, if we remember the relatively early date of his letters. However, even though our evidence seem to indicate that Paul knew no written record or a detailed oral tradition about the kingdom, the miracles and parables, the confrontations with the teachers and the passion narrative, it does not follow that Paul's message did not stand in continuity with that of Jesus.

It must be admitted that Paul does not make the "kingdom of God" an explicit theme of this message. Yet, many scholars have maintained that there is a material continuity between Jesus and Paul. Bultmann (1977, 271) suggested that the concept of the "righteousness of God" in Paul, corresponds materially to Jesus' proclamation of "the kingdom of God". Jüngel (1962) agreed and thought that Paul's remark in Rom 14:17 confirmed that: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Wedderburn (1989b, 133–135) draws upon E. P. Sanders' portrait of the historical Jesus to argue his case that there is a material continuity between Paul's teaching of God's justification of sinners and Jesus' willingness to offer "forgiveness to sinners (inclusion in the

⁹ Walter (1989, 64) maintains that the relative isolation of Mark 10:45 (the only reference in Mark which attaches soteriological significance to Jesus' death) makes it "questionable to trace this saying back to an early stage of the Jesus-tradition". Stuhlmacher (1983, 246) and Kim (1983, 38) disagree.

¹⁰ Wright (1996, 562).

kingdom)". Wedderburn takes from Sanders the cue that Jesus offered forgiveness even "before requiring reformation" (Sanders 1985, 204; his emphasis). Whether that is an accurate reconstruction of the ethical stance of the historical Jesus, is debatable,¹¹ but at least it emphasises the closeness in content with Paul—who was also criticised by his opponents 1 950 years ago for promising grace and forgiveness without ethical commitment, as we learn from Rom 6:1 (Wedderburn 1989, 135).

However, there is a fourth reason why it can, with good reason, be accepted that there is a material continuity between Jesus and Paul which had a historical base. There is namely enough evidence that Paul based some of his most moving exhortation not only on the fact of Jesus' death and resurrection, but also on the life of the earthly Jesus. To that aspect we now turn.

4. Jesus' life as an example to his followers—and to Paul's readers

In the last two decades of the 20th century, Jesus' life as an example to be followed drew substantial attention from scholars. Until the mid-1980s, research focused on the sayings of Jesus, trying to find some parallels to what Paul had to say in his letters (which have been discussed above). However, what about the way Jesus lived?

Christian Wolff, for example, who may be regarded as a minimalist as far as parallel sayings and Pauline allusions to sayings of Jesus are concerned, wrote an essay, "Humility and Self-Denial in Jesus' Life and Message and in the Apostolic Existence of Paul" (1989b), in which he attempted to demonstrate that Paul used Jesus' life as a model for his own and for other believers. Wolff singles out four

¹¹ The forgiveness which the historical Jesus offered, according to Sanders, was not simply unconditional forgiveness in the sense that Jesus forgives sins of someone even before the person became righteous (i.e. while he is still a sinner), but that he expects a subsequent repentance and reparation. According to Sanders, that would not have been a novelty in second-temple Judaism. The novum which Jesus introduced was that he offered forgiveness to sinners who "indefinitely remained sinners" (1985, 206; his emphasis). That is what distinguished Jesus from John the Baptist. This particular reconstruction of the historical Jesus forces Sanders to regard any sayings of Jesus which required a strict code of conduct of his followers (like Jesus' words in Mark 8:34: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself") to be produced by Jesus' followers, not by Jesus himself.

areas: deprivation, renunciation of marriage, humble service and suffering persecution

In his willingness to suffer *deprivation*, Paul followed the example of Jesus. Paul often referred to his poverty and homelessness. He listed the hardships he had to suffer in so-called “catalogues of afflictions” (1989b, 145), for example in 1 Cor 4:11–12; in 2 Cor 6; and in 2 Cor 11:27: hunger, thirst, shortage of food, lack of clothing. “I know what it is to be in need . . .”, Paul wrote in Phil 4:12.

Paul regarded his *renunciation of marriage* as a *charisma*, a gift of grace (1 Cor 7:6–7), a calling of God so that he could give his undivided service in mission (Wolff 1989b, 150). It is not the unmarried state in general which is seen as a gift, but in so far as it serves Christ and his church. Such a calling is not for everyone, because there are different kinds of gifts from the Spirit (1 Cor 12:7). Wolff draws our attention to the closeness of 1 Cor 7:7 to a saying of Jesus recorded only by Matthew:

The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and a wife, it is better not to marry”. Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it” (Matt 19:10–12).

Wolff argues that the dissimilarity with both Jewish and Christian tradition guarantees this as a saying of Jesus himself. Like Paul later, Jesus emphasises that the unmarried state may be a special calling for some, for the sake of “the kingdom of heaven”. This was not a requirement for Jesus’ disciples, for we know that Peter was married, but, contrary to the Jewish tradition, in which marriage was almost taken for granted as the only honourable option, both Jesus and Paul held the unmarried state (for those with a special calling) in high regard. Although Wolff (1989, 154) does not think that Paul’s remark in 1 Cor 7:7 is a direct reference to the saying of Jesus, he is convinced of the “material agreement” between Jesus and Paul in this matter.

Jesus furthermore called his disciples *to be humble* and ready to serve—by word (“Whoever wants to be first must be slave to all”, Mark 10:44; also Luke 9:48; 14:11; 18:4; 22:26) and example (John 13:4). There are parallels to this in Paul’s letters, for example 1 Cor 9:22 (“To the weak I became weak, to win the weak”); see also

2 Cor 11:7. “Even if Paul does not make an explicit connection to Jesus’ words, he still acts in accordance with Jesus’ teaching on humility” (Wolff 189, 155), as is shown in his quoting the *kenosis* hymn in Philippians 2.

Finally, Paul often speaks of contempt and *persecution*, of having suffered for the sake of preaching the gospel, listing his afflictions in 1 Cor 4:9 and 11:4; and 2 Cor 6 and 11. For him, these sufferings were analogous to that of Jesus, and in some cases he speaks even of “his being drawn into Christ’s sufferings” (Wolff 189, 156). In 2 Cor 1:5 he speaks of “sufferings of Christ”; in Gal 6:17 of the “marks of Jesus”; and in Phil 3:10 he speaks of knowing “the fellowship of his sufferings”. This is not an experience particular to Paul, but to other believers as well. These sufferings are not supplementary of Christ’s saving work but are “constitutive of Christian existence”, a reminder that salvation from suffering is still a future eschatological reality (Wolff 189, 157). These frequent references in Paul’s letters are a reminder that, though Paul probably did not know the passion narrative that the gospel writers knew, he indeed knew about the sufferings of Jesus.

To Wolff’s four areas of material agreement between Jesus’ life and Paul’s message and mission, Alexander Wedderburn and James Dunn suggested another area showing a parallel of conduct between Jesus and Paul: the attitude of the early Jesus-followers, who were all Jewish, towards Gentiles. The ministries of both Jesus and Paul were characterised by what Wedderburn (1989b, 143) calls “an openness to the outsider”. Jesus demonstrated that in his table fellowship with “sinners”, prostitutes, tax collectors and other ritual unclean and morally disreputable people. In early Christianity, the question under what conditions Gentile followers of Jesus (many of whom were formerly “God-fearing” adherents of a synagogue, we may assume) should be allowed to become part of the early Christian community, was a point of contention. Wedderburn thinks that the social and cultural location of Greek-speaking Jewish Jesus-followers (the *Hellenistai* from Acts 6:9) positioned them to first face this question. In Jerusalem, their Hebrew-speaking colleagues (the *Hebraioi*) would have been “largely shielded by their language from the questions of how much share in the new Christian message and community non-Jews might have and on what terms” (Wedderburn 1989b, 123). We know now what answer Paul (and the Hellenists, according to Wedderburn) gave to that question, and that their

answer prevailed. But what made Paul and the Hellenists give the answer that faith in the risen Christ should be the determining factor and that the Gentile Jesus-followers should not be required to observe *kashrut* laws and the circumcision? Wedderburn's answer is that Paul took his cue *from the example of Jesus* in his openness to the outsider. James Dunn agrees: "This is the suggestion that Paul's attitude towards Gentile 'sinners' was influenced by an awareness of Jesus' self-chosen mission 'to call sinners'" (1994, 171).

Wedderburn's argument seems logical, and certainly more convincing than the answer given in early 20th century, namely that Paul was influenced by Hellenism, or that the genius of Paul himself was the origin of the inclusive slant of his ministry. But if Paul followed Jesus' example, he should have had some reliable information about what the earthly Jesus said and did. The material continuity had to be undergirded by a historical continuity.

5. *The contribution of Bernard C. Lategan*

It is this last argument of Wolff, Wedderburn, Wenham, Dunn and others—highlighting Paul's knowledge of and his active use of Jesus' example as a humble servant, willing to serve rather than to be served, willing to be humiliated and persecuted and even willing to renounce the blessings of marriage and family for the sake of his message of the kingdom of God—that has, in the last two decades of the 20th century, strengthened the case for a material continuity between Paul and Jesus, based on a historical continuity.

It is precisely this argument which is the mainstay of Lategan's dissertation published in 1967.¹² In this study he discusses all the direct references to Jesus, as well as all the indirect allusions and echoes. The cumulative effect of all these references is that it points

¹² Lategan uses the term "earthly Jesus" to denote "the life of Jesus on earth from his birth to his death" (1967, 110) for his study, rather than "historical Jesus", because the latter term was used by other scholars (especially in Europe at the time of his writing) to denote something else. Fuchs and Ebeling, who at that time took sides against Bultmann and pleaded for a Second Quest for the "historical Jesus" but used that term for what "in Jesus zur Sprache kam", referring to the theological content which Jesus expressed, which was not what is normally understood by the term "historical Jesus". Since then, the latter term has been established and in this essay this term is used for Lategan's earthly Jesus.

to a "certain historical continuity" (1967, 164). However, it is his exploration of the Pauline texts which draw on Jesus' humility, willingness to serve and even to suffer for the sake of his message, which forms the strongest part of Lategan's argument. Apart from Jesus' words at the last supper in 1 Cor 11, Lategan focuses on four texts, using Paul's "reminiscences" of Jesus in his theological argument:

(a) 2 Corinthians 10:1: "I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." The genitive "of Christ", Lategan argues (1967, 125), should not be understood as a general reference to Christian meekness, or to the "fact of the kenosis", but refers to the gentleness portrayed by the historical Jesus himself. Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians is that his readers should not mistake his meekness in person (in contrast to the apparent stern tone in his letters) for a weakness in resolve. He reminds them of Jesus, who appeared to be meek and gentle, but whose resolve was strong.¹³ In 2 Corinthians he explains his own humility, which the Corinthians should not mistake for weakness. Lategan's comment is "Paul makes a virtue of his own *tapeinotés* . . . knowing that Christ preceded him and showed how one can be strong when apparently weak" (1967, 128).

(b) The same argument is used by Paul in 2 Cor 8:9: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." The context of this passage is paraenetical: the Corinthians are called upon to help other poorer congregations financially. The ultimate reason why the Corinthians should give is because Jesus became poor for their sake. Christ's becoming poor should not only be understood as a reference to his incarnation and the scandal of kenosis, but also as a reference to his physical poverty, of which Paul apparently knew.¹⁴

(c) That also applies to the Christ hymn in Phil 2:6–9: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing

¹³ Lategan (1967, 129): "Of importance is the theological significance which Paul gives to Jesus' conduct on earth: the meekness and gentleness which He reveals as Messiah, should also be characteristic of those who share in his kingdom—it is part of the eschatological fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22)."

¹⁴ Lategan (1967, 130): "A reference to Christ's poverty is only meaningful in the context of his earthly life."

to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.” In Phil 2:3 Paul exhorts the Philippians: “In humility count others better than yourselves”; then he gives them the reason why they should go against their nature: “Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.” The emphasis here is certainly on the incarnation, but under incarnation is understood “not only the fact of Jesus becoming a human being, but also his life on earth as a whole” (Lategan 1967, 134).

(d) In *Rom 15:3* Paul again refers to Jesus’ life when exhorting the believers in Rome to consider those of their flock who were “weaker”, when making decisions about what to eat and what not. The ones who are strong should not only think about themselves, but also consider the weaker brethren: “For Christ did not please himself; but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached thee fell on me’.” Lategan notes that Paul quotes Ps 69:10b, a psalm that is interpreted messianically by other NT writers. John 2:17, for example, quotes Ps 69:10a. That may be an indication that Paul carries on a tradition of reading Psalm 69 as a messianic prophecy, which was passed on to him. The reproaches Paul refers to, “can be none other than those which Jesus had to endure in his earthly life, especially his suffering and death” (Lategan 1967, 136).

In his exegesis of all four texts, Lategan argued that the suffering of Christ alluded to, refers not only to Jesus’ passion and crucifixion, but also to his life on earth. In all four texts, Paul calls his readers to a life of service and humility, and his motivation in all these texts is Jesus’ suffering and humiliation—not only on the cross, but also during his earthly life. The same applies to a number of texts (2 Cor 1:5; 4:10; Col 1:24; Gal 6:17) in which Paul addresses the suffering of his readers. They are encouraged by being reminded that they share in Jesus’ suffering—which, again, includes Jesus’ earthly life. Lategan concludes that these reminiscences of Jesus’ suffering in his earthly life were never coincidental, but that Paul employed them in his exhortation to his readers to follow the lifestyle of Jesus (1967, 143).

6. Conclusion

Did Paul found his own religion, quite unlike the teachings of Jesus, as Karen Armstrong (1983:15) and others claim? Is there a serious

discontinuity between the teachings of the Jewish prophet Jesus and “the founder of Christianity”, Paul? The discussion above made clear that the first impression of little continuity between Jesus and Paul should not mislead us. Even though Paul may have quoted few sayings of Jesus, there are many indirect references to Jesus’ teachings in Paul’s letters.

Is it perhaps true, that these indirect allusions only refer to the peripheral in Jesus and Paul’s teachings, as Nikolaus Walter (1989, 63) complains: Paul does not “quote any saying of Jesus or plainly allude to one, in which he is expounding the central content of his gospel”.

No. Firstly, Paul could possibly not refer to the life or sayings of Jesus in expounding the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus (which Walter assumes to be the central content of Paul’s gospel). The gospels and letters had different purposes. The point of Paul’s letters was to clarify what was unclear, not to retell the stories of Jesus, since they were known (Wenham 1995, 404). Secondly, when Paul then proceeds to another theme, which was just as close to the centre of his gospel—namely his exhortation that his readers should “let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil 1:27)—his main recourse in convincing and motivating them to do just that, is nothing but the incarnation *and the life of Jesus*, as is demonstrated by Paul one paragraph further in Philippians 2, and many other references in Paul’s letters, mentioned above. For that insight, we can thank recent scholars like Wedderburn, Wolff, Wenham and Dunn—and of course Bernard Lategan, who opened their line of argument 37 years earlier.

According to Walter (1989, 51), the debate on the continuity or discontinuity between Jesus and Paul continued into the late 1960s and 1970s, but without great vigour, the reason being, that the hermeneutical debate of the 1960s “made it clear that the theologically decisive question of continuity in substance between Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom of God and Paul’s gospel of justification was not dependent on particular assumptions about the history of tradition”. It is a generalization, in my opinion, to describe this as a consensus of that time, because not everyone in the 1960s and 1970s agreed¹⁵ on that point, but it is true that some did proclaim

¹⁵ Käsemann (1970, 42), for one, vigorously opposed this point of view, as well as Kümmel in his important presidential address to the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* in 1962 (Furnish 1989, 17).

this point of view with some force and it does explain why the debate lost some of its intensity. It is an unfortunate fact of history that Lategan's dissertation did not get the attention it deserved (obviously because it was written in Afrikaans)¹⁶ because throughout his study he emphasised—and, in my opinion, argued convincingly—that continuity in substance between Paul and Jesus was intertwined with a historical continuity. The newer studies mentioned above, later confirmed that. Had Lategan's study been read more widely, that insight could have come much earlier.

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¹⁶ As far as I could see, none of the scholars participating in this debate read and referred to Lategan's argument. Only Fraser (1974, 43, 52, 53) refers to Lategan, but then it is mainly to the English summary in his dissertation, and not Lategan's main argument developed in the Afrikaans dissertation. One wonders how many other dissertations written in, for example, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish, and Russian etc. have been overlooked for the same reason. This fact does have some serious implications for the study of early Christianity as well as for the dangers of cultural hegemony in our future world, but that is a matter for another discussion.

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“NOT ACCORDING TO HUMAN CRITERIA”:
BERNARD LATEGAN’S READING OF GALATIANS
IN A CRUMBLING *APARTHEID* STATE

Cilliers Breytenbach

ABSTRACT

This essay explores the influence continuous reading of Paul’s letter to the Galatians had on Bernard C. Lategan. During the eighties, his reception of the letter freed him, an Afrikaans speaking academic, to move beyond the racist and nationalistic constraints of his personal environment in the apartheid state, to further the course of an inclusive South African democracy. Lategan’s biography illustrates the force that a methodologically guided reading of an ancient text can exert upon the actions of an academic.

1. *Introduction*

South African NT scholarship played an ambiguous role since its coming of age in the second half of the 20th century. Though pride can be taken in the scholarly achievement of the *New Testament Society of South Africa* (NTSSA) since its foundation in 1965,¹ one is saddened by the fact that this professional society which, by constitution, is explicitly ecumenical and non-racial, has never chosen to demonstrate the relevance that its study of the NT has for the society in which its members did their research. It must be stated from the outset, that the society did reject all forms of discrimination and that some individual members of the society were clear and decisive in their critique against and rejection of *apartheid*.² Nevertheless, the silence of the majority of its members and the commitment of some of the society’s leading members to a “neutral scientific” stance until the

¹ For overviews see Du Toit (1993a; 1993b) and De Villiers (2005a; 2005b).

² See De Villiers (2005b), cf. sec. 2: “The Society and socio-political structures”. I thank the author for allowing me to read through his pre-publication draft.

end of *apartheid* is revealing,³ especially in the light of the fact that the NT scholar who was most influential in the post war era, E. P. Groenewald, stood at the cradle of the Dutch Reformed Church's theological underpinning of the heresy of *apartheid*.⁴

Some would still call Groenewald the doyen of South African NT Studies.⁵ He and many other theologians of Afrikaans origin played a leading role in the secretive *Afrikaner Broederbond* that had great influence in disseminating *apartheid* ideology into all aspects of South African culture.⁶ Very few Afrikaans speaking NT scholars dared to oppose the *apartheid* policy of the white minority government, and the influence of the *Broederbond* on the white only Afrikaans "churches".⁷ In the third quarter of the 20th century, most South African NT scholars came from an Afrikaans reformed background. In the course of their careers, many of them were asked to become members of the *Broederbond*, which had first and foremost as goal the furtherance of the supremacy and interest of white Afrikaans-speaking people.

There was, however, an exception. Andrie B. du Toit, who arguably was the most influential NT scholar in South Africa during the last quarter of the 20th century, declined for theological reasons, the "honourable" invitation to become a member of the *Broederbond*.⁸

³ Cf. the hermeneutical critique against the use of the Bible in the apartheid ideology by Vorster (1983). On the issue cf. Smit (1990).

⁴ Cf. Breytenbach (1988), and Vorster (1983).

⁵ Neither Colenso nor J. du Plessis ever exerted a comparable influence. Groenewald promoted the careers of several post graduate students and directed them to the Netherlands for doctoral research.

⁶ In his exposé of the *Afrikaner Broederbond* in 1979, Serfontein lists the names of influential NTSSA members, including E. P. Groenewald, J. C. Coetzee (Professor for New Testament, University of Potchefstroom), G. M. M. Pelser (Professor for New Testament, Faculty of Theology [Section A], University of Pretoria) and B. A. du Toit (who would ten years later become senior lecturer for New Testament at the University of Stellenbosch); cf. Serfontein (1979). See also Wilkins and Strydom (1978). For the earlier history see Bloomberg (1989).

⁷ Albert Geyser (cf. Hartin 1988) and J. H. Roberts did.

⁸ After being elected as successor to E. P. Groenewald as professor for New Testament at the University of Pretoria (Section B) in 1971, Andrie du Toit was asked to join the *Broederbond*. He declined with the argument that if Christ has set you free, no human should ever again bind your conscience. (Personal communication to myself and J. P. H. Wessels, in his office during our third semester in Theology 1977, warning us not to be recruited by those professors in theology [he mentioned no names] who select students for membership of the *Ruiterwag*). Willem Nicol, son of one of the founder members, also refused to become a member. This decision caused his scholarly career to be terminated before it even started.

Bernard C. Lategan however, was no exception to the rule. As a student at Stellenbosch, he was by own admission a founder member of the ominous youth league of the *Broederbond*, the *Ruiterwag*, and in due course he became a member of the *Broederbond* itself.⁹ In those days, the *Ruiterwag* played a decisive role in student politics at Afrikaans universities like Stellenbosch and Pretoria. Its members devoted their first and foremost loyalty to the Afrikaner people.

During the 1980s, Lategan became increasingly aware of the fact that the social position of an exegete needs to be accounted for. In due course, he became one of the most important Afrikaans exegetical voices calling for social transformation during the final decade under the rule of the white minority government.¹⁰ Initially, Lategan was engaged in an “in-house” discourse within theology. He later realized that in order to change value systems, and to establish a new public ethos, one has to participate in the open policy discourse amongst the general public (David Tracy’s third public).¹¹ It became increasingly clear to him and others that

... the social system of *apartheid* is totally unacceptable—both in theory and in practice. In both respects, it is incompatible with basic moral values and it affronts the human dignity of all whose lives are subject to it. The same is true of the theological justification for the system, which has been and still is being advanced from time to time. Such justification is primarily based on a view of humanity that does not have a sound theological basis (Lategan 1987, 1).

In order to influence the path South Africa would be taking after *apartheid*, Lategan co-authored *The Option for an Inclusive Democracy* (1987). The arguments in this document are based on the basis of Christian anthropology, where a non-racial, inclusive, plural democracy is more in line with basic Christian norms. The document states that all people are equal in their dignity that is given to them by God. Since Lategan is the only exegete amongst the authors of this document, one may assume that he took responsibility for the arguments based on biblical tradition. Apart from stressing the Judaeo-Christian belief that all humans are created by God, the authors

⁹ Cf. Lategan (1999).

¹⁰ Cf. Lategan (1987).

¹¹ On this issue, cf. Lategan (1995a; 1995b). At the *World Values Survey Association* General membership meeting (2 September 2004, Budapest, Hungary), Lategan was elected as chairman; cf. <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/news/minutes.htm>.

draw heavily on Jesus' love commandment (Matt 22:37–40). Their illustrations are based on the example of the Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) and Paul's view that salvation is for everyone, because God loves the sinners whilst they are still his enemies (Rom 5:6–10). Drawing on Paul's concept of the church as body of Christ (1 Cor 12), where the different members constitute the unity of the body through their diversity, the document addresses "human unity and interdependence". Lategan and his co-authors argue that the diversity within the population of South Africa renders the possibility to take the serving Jesus as example, and to contribute to the building of unity of diversity. Community only becomes possible when different people serve one another in such a way that individual groups serve the interest of all people. Human beings are free to choose. These three cardinal concepts, the church as "an integrated diversity"; the example of Jesus as a servant to all mankind (not to groups!); and humanities' freedom of decision-making were fruit of Lategan's exegetical work, especially on Galatians, to which we now turn.

2. *The role of Galatians in restructuring Lategan's thought on language, culture and nationality*

It is impossible to do justice to Lategan's multi-faceted contribution to the intellectual discourse in and outside South Africa in one short article.¹² This essay merely traces the role the letter to the Galatians played in his engagement to a change towards a democratic South Africa during the 1980s. The first phase of his development as an exegete is well documented in his various studies on Paul's letter to the Galatians. In fact, according to his own view, his study of this letter that was the focus of his research since his doctoral dissertation,¹³ contributed greatly in shifting his opinion on the role of language, culture and nationality.¹⁴

Lategan's redefinition of the relationship between Christianity and nationalism was influenced decisively by his interpretation of Paul's letter to the Galatians. These influences and new insights took place in the midst of methodological developments in the *New Testament*

¹² See the contribution of Smit in this volume.

¹³ Cf. Lategan (1967).

¹⁴ Cf. Lategan (1999, 134–136, 139).

Society of South Africa during the 1980s. Lategan himself was a major role player in leading the society to move away from discourse and the structure and meaning of the text as object. He started to follow trends in pragmatics, continental reception theory, and North American reader's response criticism. From this vantage point, he focussed attention on the interaction between the text as language event and its historical and modern readers, underlining the mediatory power of language.¹⁵

At the same time, the work of Ricoeur became increasingly important for my own thinking. His interpretation theory, his exploration of narrative and time and his insights into the transformative potential of texts, provided a framework to integrate philosophical, literary and theological perspectives (Lategan 1999, 130).

It is important to note that Lategan always keeps the whole letter in focus: according to him, chapters 1–2 and 5–6 are misunderstood when they are not interpreted as integral parts of the whole letter, which has its main theological argument in chapters 3–4. In an early essay in honour of the supervisor of his doctoral thesis, the Dutch NT scholar Herman Ridderbos, Lategan uses the letter to the Galatians to illustrate the South African exegetical approach to structural analysis.¹⁶ Explicating the argumentative coherence between Gal 1–2 and the rest of the letter, Lategan highlights that the letter stresses the inversion of relationships, and underlines the fundamental role of change in the perceptions and actions of the figures in the text. Paul, as opponent of the gospel, becomes its main promoter. During the crisis in Antioch, former leaders like Peter and Barnabas deviate from the straight path of the gospel, thus becoming its opponents.¹⁷ Since the gospel is bound to God, who does not change, human resistance against God can be broken, for even Paul's resistance was changed into service to the Lord.

A decade later, addressing the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*,¹⁸ Lategan expanded on his view that the tension between God and

¹⁵ Cf. Lategan (1989, 105–106). For more detail on these issues, cf. the essay by Smit in this volume and De Villiers (2005a; 2005b).

¹⁶ Cf. Lategan (1978).

¹⁷ Cf. Lategan (1987, 82).

¹⁸ At the 42nd meeting of the SNTS (Göttingen 1987), Lategan became the first ever South African to give a short main paper before the general meeting on invitation by the committee. Cf. www.ncl.ac.uk/snts/papergivers.html. More recently, Lategan became the third member of the NTSSA to serve on the committee of the SNTS (2000–2003).

man dominates the first two chapters of the letter.¹⁹ Gal 1:11–12 is central to the understanding of the whole letter. Arguing against the general trend in NT scholarship, he advocates that Paul is not defending his apostleship, but rather propagates the following: “The gospel does not conform to human criteria, it does not take human considerations into account”. (Lategan 1988, 420). Far from expressing an anti-human attitude, the cryptic statement that “the gospel is not according to a human” in Gal 1:11, leads to the heart of Paul’s theology. His apostleship and the way he received it is an illustration of the unusual and unexpected way God works (cf. Gal 1:1)—not according to human criteria (Gal 1:11). In his ministry, Paul is not pleasing humankind, he is pleasing God (cf. Gal 1:10). In Gal 1:13–2:21 he substantiates the claim of 1:11–12 that the gospel he proclaims has neither a human nature nor a human origin.

By “human” or “normal standards” Paul’s own conversion and his call to apostleship, the official approval of his preaching by the authorities in Jerusalem, and the table-fellowship between Jewish and gentile Christians are unthinkable. The unexpected, unusual nature of the gospel does not only concern Paul’s apostleship, but the whole Christian community. The Christian experience was consistent with God’s ways, it was granted against human expectation, in disregard of human standards, without human merits—by grace alone, as “new creation” (*kainē ktisis* 6.15c) (Lategan 1988, 425).

The new creation is preceded by the end of self-existence of man. In 2:17–21 Paul uses the metaphor of dying with Christ. “For Paul the new existence coincides with Christ’s death. . . . Christ’s representation on his behalf is so real that Paul considers himself part of that event” (Lategan 1988, 428). The unusual nature of the gospel implies that God first had to end the natural human existence through the death of Christ. Paul, the church persecuting Jew, the gentile Galatians, they all died with Christ. Through his Spirit, God created Paul the apostle and the Galatian brothers and sisters in Christ anew. Liberated from their bondage, humans can discover the real nature of their human existence and realize their potential as human beings, living for God and Christ (cf. Gal 2:20). God made the change possible; it did not come according to human standards. In fact, he changed human expectations, which led to a complete new way of

¹⁹ Cf. Lategan (1988).

understanding one self. For Paul that meant the re-interpretation of his Jewish tradition.

In his contribution to a collection of essays on the early Church, published for an Afrikaans audience during the state of emergency in 1987, Lategan demonstrates how self-understanding and world view, articulated in the letter to the Galatians, brought about his own personal change. He critically reviewed his own religious tradition, in which his changed view on loyalty towards nationhood becomes evident.²⁰ With reference to Paul's argument, he explicitly points out that once loyalty to one's cultural heritage supersedes one's loyalty to Christian values, culture becomes a dangerous ideology, threatening the Christian community.²¹ The question of loyalty is not a theoretical one. It pertains to decisions one make in the course of daily life. Such decisions are to conform to two essential requirements of the gospel that Paul preached to the Galatians. Firstly, there can be no other requirement for membership of the church than the belief in the redemptive work of Christ. Secondly, the gospel creates a new family of God, which is not structured along cultural or national lines. The unity of the children of God (Gal 3:28) is a reality which should be accepted by Christians and which should shape the future of every Christian community. Racial and cultural, as well as gender and social divides have to be overcome. The unity of all believers in Christ should determine the way in which all Christians structure their lives, be it the religious-cultural aspects thereof, the social reality in which they live or the way in which Christians of opposite sexes interact socially.

In both above-mentioned essays, Lategan draws heavily on his exegesis of the whole letter, which is accessible in his short commentary published in 1986.²² This commentary is still the major exposition of Paul's letter for readers of Afrikaans. Through his exposition, Lategan challenges his readers to redefine their reality as Christians, since it will lead them to revisit their system of values and re-evaluate the role of their cultural heritage. In commenting on Gal 3:28, Lategan explicitly states that the unity in Christ should

²⁰ During 1977 *The Sunday Times* weekly published names of Broederbond members. Amidst this controversy (see <http://www.suntimes.co.za/2004/04/04/insight/in18.asp>) Lategan and his Stellenbosch colleague, H. J. B. Combrinck (Professor for New Testament at the Theological Faculty) announced that they left the organization.

²¹ Cf. Lategan (1987).

²² Cf. Lategan (1986).

be the determining reality in the existence of the believer. This unity relativises all other human and natural loyalties. Every believer in Christ can rightly be proud of, and grateful for his/her cultural heritage. "But when it becomes his/her highest value and first loyalty, it pushes the true Christian system of values aside. Then it becomes an ideology, which can only destroy the true Christian community" (Lategan 1986, 75). The latter demands the believer's highest loyalty, not cultural heritage. Lategan concludes his paragraph:

In the current circumstances [i.e. 1986: state of emergency, zenith of the opposition to *apartheid*] it became all the more imperative for the believer to determine precisely where his highest loyalty lies—not only in theory, but in every day's practical life (Lategan 1986, 76).

3. *The mediating role of language in the construction of a revised identity: Galatians and Philemon as examples*

Change in self-understanding leads to change in social action, since the latter is motivated by convictions—the way in which individuals understand themselves and their world—by understanding of reality. How is it possible to let people understand themselves differently? Such understanding of reality is articulated and mediated through language, hence the mediatory power of language. The mediating possibilities of language can thus be used to effect a transition from one world view, from one way of understanding oneself, from one set of values, "... to a new self-understanding, to establish a new conviction, to get him or her to act in a different way".²³ Drawing on Paul Ricoeur, Lategan underlines the role metaphorical conceptualisation plays in the process of the linguistic articulation of a new symbolic universe. Utilizing especially Paul's letters to the Galatians and Philemon, he explains in an essay in honour of a leading Dutch Roman Catholic NT scholar, Bas van Iersel (1989) the theological and social relevance of the concept of the "church as the family of God". As an anti-structure, the concept of the family of God implies alternative patterns of social relations and behaviour. It is also embedded within a network of relations: God is called father, Jesus is called Son of God, the individual believers since being adopted into childhood,

²³ Lategan (1989, 106).

children of God.²⁴ Lategan's acquaintance with developments in the theory of metaphor, and his insight in Detlev Dormeyer's and Norman Petersen's research on the role of the family of God in the gospels and in Paul's letters, enabled him to explain the mediatory role that symbolic language play:

... language makes it possible to step "outside" reality into a "proposed world", which enables us to gain a new perspective and understanding in order to return to reality on a different level (Lategan 1989, 108).

Language creates a new reality and reintroduces it into everyday life. Language's role to mediate an anti-structure into reality stretches beyond the articulation of the new metaphoric concept and its integration in a symbolic universe. Through performative language, people that are not biologically related are called brothers and sisters, are greeted and blessed in the name of the father. When believers have accepted the new reality of being brothers and sisters within the family of God, altering their self-understanding, it can be accepted that they will act accordingly. A new self-understanding leaves no aspect of human life untouched, it implies re-socialisation. In order to illustrate the consequences of Paul's translation of the concept of the family of God, Lategan again turns to the letters to Philemon and the Galatians. Lategan explains the egalitarian thrust the concept of the family of God has for social and cultural differences (cf. Lategan 1989, 113–114). According to Lategan, the acid test is to act in terms of the new symbolic universe. On the doorstep of his house church, Philemon had to decide whether he would accept his former slave Onesimus, who became a brother in Christ, as his brother. If Philemon had chosen to stay a slave owner, he would have denied the new reality in Christ. In Jerusalem, the leaders of the church had to decide whether they would accept Titus, the uncircumcised Greek who was baptised into the body of Christ as a brother. In order to be one of the children of God, the gentiles did not require circumcision, because they accepted Paul's ministry, who proclaimed that through faith in Christ non-Jews like Titus could become children

²⁴ In a sense it is amazing that South African NT Studies took so long to realize the social implications Paul's concept of the family of God offers to theology. Amongst the former generation of scholars, E. P. Groenewald did his dissertation on fellowship (*koinōnia*) and J. L. de Villiers his on the adoption to childhood (*hyiothesia*) of the believer! For details see Du Toit (1993a; 1993b).

of Abraham. In his conclusion of this scholarly paper written during the state of emergency in 1988, Lategan addresses the situation in South Africa:

In a South African context, for example, condemning *apartheid* is not enough. To make a non-racial, democratic, inclusive society viable and enduring, much more is required—of which creative and imaginative theological thinking is not the least. Fundamental theological values and their implications for all facets of society must be thought through . . . —not only as academic exercise, but as a grass roots undertaking . . . And the greatest challenge is to act in terms of this new understanding of society (Lategan 1989, 115).

Lategan must have written these words roughly during the period he came under extensive critique and pressure from the ranks of his own church, the Dutch Reformed Church. Because he and three other members of the church signed the sequel document to the well-known *Kairos Document*, called *The Road to Damascus*, the church intervened demanding that he withdrew his signature. He refused and consequently his right to teach at the theological faculty of the University of Stellenbosch was withdrawn.²⁵

In an essay dedicated in 1990 to the renowned South African born NT scholar, Abraham J. Malherbe of Yale Divinity School, Lategan poses the question: “Is Paul developing a specifically Christian ethic in Galatians?”²⁶ He confines himself to the nature and style of Paul’s ethics. It is surprising that the letter lacks a set of comprehensive rules for ethical conduct. Even the so-called paraenetic section in chapters 5 and 6 gives only two specific instructions: the call to freedom (5:1 and 13) and the admonition to walk in the Spirit (5:16 and 25). Why was Paul so reluctant to develop a fuller and more distinctive ethic? In the first instance, the heart of the theological argument of the letter is that salvation does not come from “the works of the law”. Christian action is not motivated by the necessity to act according to the Law of Moses. Christian conduct is not motivated by fear of punishment or hope on reward. It is a consequence of the theological nature of the new existence in faith, “. . . a responsibility that flows from the theological self-understanding of the believer, which implies discretion and which must be executed in

²⁵ Cf. Lategan (1993a).

²⁶ Cf. Lategan (1990).

freedom" (Lategan 1990, 324). In the second instance, Paul's reluctance can be explained with reference to Gal 2:19–20. He died for the law, the law as basis for ethical foundation has fallen away. The severance from the law makes it possible to consider all kinds of ethical tradition, e.g. Hellenistic. The theological re-definition provides the criterion for how these traditions are to be used. The life he now lives is theologically re-defined as "... a life in faith and a life for God, of which the ethical style is at the same time exemplified by the event of the cross. The mode is one of love and service (2:20)" (Lategan 1990, 324). The new way of understanding the Christian existence as being called to freedom, enabled Paul to select available ethical material and to make responsible choices compatible with his theological principles. Paul takes great care that his Galatian readers understand that they are free (5:1–13), that they live through the Spirit (5:25). Constructing their new status through his language, he also empowers them. Because they are free, he incites them to exercise freedom (5:1), since they are spiritual, they must act in a spiritual way (5:25), "... he does not tire of reminding them who they are" (1990, 326). He formulates general principles: "So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith" (6:10). He then leaves it to the Galatian readers to use their imagination to fill in the gaps and act accordingly in concrete situations. Instead of giving his readers detailed instruction, Paul uses *sententiae* (5:26–6:10) and cryptic references like "the law of Christ" and "the carrying of one's own burden" (6:5) in order to ensure their participation.

Gaps and cryptic remarks form an essential element of what Paul considers to be the proper mental attitude and ethical orientation of converts to the gospel. By encouraging independent decisions and responsible ethical behaviour, he is preparing his readers for both his absence and for the future (Lategan 1990, 327).

According to Lategan, Paul demonstrates in the letter to the Galatians how ethical decisions are to be prepared. Later Christians too will have to discern what the gospel requires from them in a particular situation, they will have to find the courage to act accordingly. Paul presents an ethical minimum to stimulate a creative and responsible application of basic theological principles in new situations. He reaches beyond the constraints of place and time, demonstrating that the action required by the gospel can be executed in a Hellenistic

context, beyond the boundaries of Judaism. Lategan's concluding remark shifts the focus to his own social context of 1990, the year in which the ANC was unbanned, and Nelson Mandela released from prison:

For many who also find themselves in the throes of cultural and political transition—who still have to experience what liberation means—this perspective provides a strong motivation to reach beyond themselves, to give new substance to freedom, to use freedom imaginatively and creatively, and in doing so, to guarantee its survival for future generations (Lategan 1990, 327, 328).

4. Galatians and the Christian freedom of decision-making

From the vantage point of faith, it is not ethically decisive to know or to believe the right thing, but to do it. In an essay written in Afrikaans and published in 1993²⁷ Lategan notes: "But before one can act in faith, one has to take notice of the state of affairs, one has to consider the situation and has to decide how to act" (1993, 132). He argues that Christian ethic does not consist of a set of clearly defined rules. Rather, it aims to develop a specific attitude to life. This underlying perspective is founded on basic principles, which leads to concrete decisions in daily life. Times of widespread social transition require a re-evaluation of the implications and meaning of fundamental Christian values in the transformed situation. It is in a context of fundamental social transformation, such as the one Lategan was writing his 1992 essay that Paul's letter to the Galatians has special relevance.

In this letter, one can study how the early church managed a critical period of transition and how Paul explained the nature of Christian ethic. From earlier Christian tradition, the type of Christianity that came into being in Galatia was questioned severely. For the first time, Christian congregations did not exist within the legal and cultural framework of Diaspora Judaism. Christian communities had to get on their feet despite unsympathetic and sometimes hostile gentile environment. The new context, new reality of Christians without a Jewish background and believers without the Law of Moses, caused

²⁷ Lategan (1993b).

an innovative process of theologising. The shift of Christianity from being an alternative direction within Judaism to a religious movement beyond the synagogue raised many practical and principal questions. Should non Jewish Christians be circumcised, should they keep the law? Is the temple far away in Jerusalem of any relevance to them? The new reality and new questions forced Paul to re-consider traditional theological positions. During this process, he discovered the potential of the gospel in addressing new challenges. Paul discovered that the Jewish way of life is no essential prerequisite for admission to the Christian community. This discovery had important consequences for his future definition of what the heart of the gospel is: His theological insight, that redemption is by faith alone, determines the guidelines he gave to the Galatians. According to Paul, God redeems humans through Christ from a state of spiritual childhood. The Jewish life under the law or the gentile life "under the principles of the world", are compared to immaturity. The Spirit of Christ redeems them from this bondage, and Christianity frees them unto spiritual adulthood. The Galatians are called unto freedom. Accordingly, the letter to the Galatians urges the readers to take up this freedom.

Lategan ends his essay with "implications for South Africa". He argues that it has to be reconsidered, what the basic and fundamental content and its ethical appeal are. He appeals to the church to accept the challenge in providing fundamental values on which the new society can be built (1993b, 141). In this process, it is important to—as Paul did in Galatians—re-evaluate the past, and discover those elements in the Christian tradition that can give birth to new possibilities of a Christian way of life. As Paul selected from the repertoire of Hellenistic morality in the light of the gospel, Christians should scrutinize the whole of South African ethical tradition, and through ecumenical discourse engage those elements that could contribute to the much-needed general system of values needed by the transformed South African society.

5. *Concluding remarks*

The 27th of April 1994 marks for South Africa the end of *apartheid* and the transition to a constitutional democracy. For Bernard Lategan there was no further need to read Galatians in challenging the legacy of *apartheid*. His interest in Paul's letter though, has not dwindled.

His position as first director of the *Stellenbosch Institute of Advance Studies* gave him the opportunity to return to questions on the nature and function of historiography—questions he already posed at the beginning of his academic career.²⁸ Nevertheless, he still uses Galatians as “his” example, when he draws on the history of early Christianity.²⁹ Future historians, writing on the New Testament Society of South Africa and their ethics of interpretation during the age of *apartheid* will gratefully draw on the positive example of Lategan and Galatians. Or is it Galatians and Lategan? It is best to leave it to Bernard Lategan to circumvent that hermeneutical pitfall. His contribution to the discussion on hermeneutics undoubtedly had a remarkable impact on theological development in South Africa.³⁰

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²⁸ Cf. Lategan (1979).

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PART TWO

INTERPRETING THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR THE
CONSTRUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY IN ANTIQUITY

NEW HORIZONS IN HISTORICAL JESUS RESEARCH?
HERMENEUTICAL CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING
THE SO-CALLED “THIRD QUEST”
OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Jens Schröter

ABSTRACT

This essay deals with the new approaches to the historical Jesus going under the label “Third Quest of the historical Jesus” from a methodological and hermeneutical viewpoint. The first part describes the epistemological presuppositions which characterize our constructions of the past. As Johann Gustav Droysen already acknowledged, every picture of the past is dependent on our knowledge of the sources and on “constructive imagination” (Collingwood). The second part shows that the archaeological findings from Galilee made in the last decades have to be integrated in a plausible historical portrait of Jesus. According to the archaeological, numismatic and epigraphic evidence, the Galilee of Jesus’ time was a predominantly Jewish area with well-established trade connections to the surrounding regions. Politically, the Galilee was a relatively quiet area. The activity of Jesus has to be interpreted against this background and not against a general “Mediterranean” framework, characterized by tensions of patron and client. Taking these findings seriously and using our “creative imagination” lead to descriptions of Jesus’ activity as the starting point of Christian faith, rather than when we drive a sharp wedge between the two approaches.

1. *Remembering of the past and the search for the historical Jesus*

In a recent article on *History and Reality in the Interpretation of Biblical Texts* Bernard Lategan deals with the problem of interpreting the past in NT studies with special regard to the quest of the historical Jesus (Lategan 2004). Taking his starting point by the experience of multiple realities and the network society, he calls into question approaches like, for example, those of Rudolf Bultmann, Ernst Käsemann and Gerd Theissen, which are committed to the idea of

a fixed reality behind the texts. Referring instead to concepts of historiography after the so-called “linguistic turn”, Lategan privileges the idea of remembering the past as a dynamic and vibrant venture. This approach, Lategan argues, would be much more in common with the biblical texts, because they link the past to the present by creative recollection. As examples, he refers to Deuteronomy as memorial literature as well as to Paul’s reconfiguration of the memory of Abraham in Galatians (2004, 146–150). In both writings, the aim of remembering the past is not simply to preserve facts, but to make the *present* comprehensible through the performative act of narrating history: in Deuteronomy Moses’ Torah teaching is remembered as an exemplary performance of expounding the Torah; by referring to Abraham instead of Moses, Paul recalls Israel’s history by going behind the distinction of Jew and Gentile, providing a common history for both of these groups of human beings.

The challenging thesis of Lategan’s article is that history should not be regarded as a fixed set of events. History, instead, exists in the form of a remembered past, recalled in stories by those who seek to understand their own situation. Consequently, the idea of recovering “real” events of previous times should be replaced by what Werner Kelber has recently called “mnemohistory” (Kelber 2005). Relying on the approaches of Maurice Halbwachs and Jan Assmann, the use of this term by Kelber is intended to link the concept of retaining the past with the memorial process of selection and modification in order to serve the identity of a community. Regarded from this viewpoint, the way of dealing with the past by the authors of the biblical writings is much more suitable to the present circumstances in a globalised world with its many different identities and stories in that it refers to history as social construction that consolidates group identities by developing a symbolic and social framework.

If we confront this view with historical-critical Jesus research, it becomes obvious that the basic impulses of that discipline for a long time went in another direction. An essential effect was the application of the concept of scientific criticism as it was developed in the so-called “Enlightenment” to the understanding of history. Based on this development, the quest for the “historical Jesus” originated in the 18th century to replace the dogmatic interpretations of the church by purely historical perception (Dunn 2003, 25–65). Hermann Samuel

Reimarus, who is often referred to as the inaugurator of historical Jesus research, saw a decisive difference between the historical Jesus who walked through Galilee, preached the ethics of God's kingdom, and exhorted the Jews to live according to God's will on the one hand and early Christian devotion to a saviour who was resurrected and exalted to heaven, and who will return at the end of the time on the other. According to Reimarus, Jesus' first followers invented that concept because they were unwilling to return to their Galilean villages to keep up again their former life as fishermen etc. (Reimarus 1778).

Leaving aside the well-known shortcomings of Reimarus' approach, it has to be stressed that he was the first scholar who explicitly separated the historical Jesus from the interpretations in early Christology. He considered the evangelists as trustworthy historiographers, whereas the apostles who wrote the letters of the NT were, in his view, responsible for the creation of a saviour cult, which had no foundation in the life and activity of the historical Jesus.

Reimarus' distinction is based on philosophical presuppositions different from those in modern historiography. His approach was instead committed to the philosophical idea of Christianity as a reasonable religion as it was developed in Cartesianism (Dunn 2003, 26). This approach is characterized by a conjunction of theology and philosophy, regarding the core of Christianity as a philosophical-ethical message, accessible by rational arguments. Although one cannot yet speak of a historical consciousness, the identification of historical fact and truth is a logical consequence of this concept: the results of historical research serve to bridge the gap between past and present because they were regarded as scientifically proven and therefore independent of time restrictions. According to this theory, the content of Jesus' teaching could directly be transferred to the present through scientific inquiry.

The approaches of Reimarus, and even of David Friedrich Strauss, were developed on the basis of philosophical ideas and not yet affected by the rise of the historical consciousness. It is remarkable that Strauss explicitly stated that the core of Christian faith is not affected by his critical investigation of Jesus' life. He even wanted to recover the "dogmatic meaning of Jesus' life", behind the "myths" of the Gospel narratives (Strauss 1835/1836). Nevertheless, the notion of an immediate access to the past, independent of the perception

and language of the interpreter, is a legacy in historical Jesus research, whose consequences are visible up to very recent contributions. For example, Martin Ebner in his recently published book on Jesus describes his project as looking at Jesus with the eyes and ideas of his contemporaries (Ebner 2003, 9). It may be questioned, however, whether this is possible, and even if it were, whether it would be a worthwhile procedure. Similarly, in a collection of essays on Jesus by German catholic scholars, published in 2004, Ludger Schenke writes in the Preface: "The task of history is only to describe, not to make present. Only recalling, sense-making narratives can revive persons of the past and their activities. But using such an interpretive language is not the task of writing history" (Schenke et al. 2004, 7; my translation from the German original). Given the general character of human language as a presupposition to comprehend reality in general, and of course also the past, and taking into account that history is always an interpretation of the remains of the past in contemporary languages and ideas, such a statement in a very recent publication on Jesus seems untenable.

The perspectives of several Jesus scholars from North America are similar. For example, Craig Evans states: "Unlike earlier quests, the Third Quest is not driven by theological-philosophical concerns. There has been a shift away from a philosophical orientation to a historical orientation" (Evans 1995, 10–11). Dom Crossan and Jonathan Reed write in the Introduction of their co-authored book *Excavating Jesus*: "This book is about digging for Jesus, digging down archaeologically amidst the stones to reconstruct his world and digging down exegetically amidst the texts to reconstruct his life" (Crossan and Reed 2001, 1). The interpretation of texts is regarded here as comparable to the work of the archaeologist who digs amidst the stones in order to find the earliest strata of a building, whereas the constructive character of all occupation with the past is neglected.

These examples show a tendency in recent Jesus research to refer to historical *facts* or *events* in order to overcome dogmatic constraints of Christian theology. According to such approaches, historical research should provide the basis for a direct access to the past whereas hermeneutical or epistemological considerations are set apart. The ethical or philosophical ideas to which Reimarus and Strauss referred are, therefore, now replaced by historical inquiry. On a symposium honouring Bernard Lategan such approaches cannot pass through without qualifications. Before turning to these, it should be stressed,

however, that it was an important contribution of historical criticism to insist that interpretations of Jesus' activity and fate have to be based on solid analyses of the available material. No one today doubts that it is possible to gain an adequate picture of Jesus only by investigating the context of first century Judaism, looking at his Galilean environment, and including all the relevant data gained from literary texts as well as from the epigraphic and archaeological evidence. Such approaches have to be not only *historical*, but also *critical*. As was pointed out by almost all Jesus scholars since Albert Schweitzer and William Wrede, the truth claims made by the Gospels writers are not to be taken on a literary level as if they were concerned to deliver an accurate account of Jesus' public ministry. Instead, as Gerd Theissen has pointed out, the story of Jesus has to be regarded as a specific blending of historical data and religious ideas, or to use David Friedrich Strauss' term: "myths" (Theissen 2000, 47). Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked, that the Gospels according to their self-understanding are historical narratives—although not in our critical sense, of course—a claim, which was all too easy watered down by redaction critical approaches. Only if we look at the Gospels as stories about events, happened some decades ago, we will have the adequate key for their interpretation (Merenlahti and Hakola 1999, 34).

It is important to come to grips with the question of what we gain by using our critical tools to interpret the early narratives about Jesus. To approach this question, I shall begin with a quotation of Johann Gustav Droysen, the founder of modern theory of historiography in the 19th century. In his important *Outline of the Principles of History*, which is actually a publication of his lectures read in the second half of the 19th century in Jena and Berlin, Droysen wrote: "The outcome of criticism is not 'the exact historical fact'. It is the placing of the material in such a condition as renders possible a relatively safe and correct view. The conscientiousness which refuses to go beyond the immediate results of criticism, makes the mistake of resigning all further work with these results to fancy, instead of going on to find such rules for this further work as shall assure its correctness" (1967, 25–26).

These remarks reveal an awareness of the limits of historical criticism already at the beginning of modern historiography. Although in the era of what is often called "historicism", the idea of a fixed reality behind the texts was developed, both by Droysen and in

contemporary theory of historiography it was pointed out, that the relationship of present and past is more complex.

First, our knowledge is limited because we have only fragmentary remains from the past, which have survived up to the present. By creating pictures of the past, historians depend on these vestiges. With regard to historical Jesus research, it can, for example, be referred to the discovery of the Qumran scrolls and the publications of several Jewish writings from the Second Temple period since the second half of the 19th century. These sources have contributed to more nuanced images of different kinds of Judaism of the Hellenistic-Roman period. To defend the idea of Judaism as a uniform religion with a coherent perspective on the law, purity, or with a consistent attitude towards Hellenism is, therefore, no longer possible. As a consequence, Jesus as a first century Jew must be interpreted against the background of a specific type of Judaism, namely its Palestinian, or, more exactly, its Galilean shape. I will return to this aspect in the next part of my essay.

Second, it must be stressed that dealing with the past is only possible by using what Collingwood has called “constructive imagination”. Already Droysen referred to the necessity of interpretation as part of the work of the historian, which has to accomplish the critical evaluation of the historical material (1967, 26). It is always the historian himself or herself who composes a historical narrative on the basis of the remains from the past, and thereby links them to the present. There is no meaning in the remains themselves without such an interpretation. In historical Jesus research, we should therefore distinguish between the *historical* and the *earthly* or *real* Jesus. The *historical* Jesus is a model, based on the knowledge of the sources by the historian and searched with the critical tools as developed in the 19th and 20th century. These pictures are necessary for an access to Jesus conditioned by the premises of the historical consciousness. On the other hand, these models should not be mistaken as mirrors of the *real* Jesus. One can ask whether it makes sense at all to speak of a *real* Jesus. No one can comprehend the total reality of a person, even not that person itself. The *real* Jesus in a strict sense, is, therefore, an ideal construct and cannot be the aim of interpreting the available evidence.

What we gain by historical research, therefore, are different pictures of a historical Jesus with more or less plausibility, which should not be misunderstood as re-constructions of that person itself. The

distinction between the *historical* and the *earthly* Jesus, can therefore also be expressed as the differentiation between *history* and *past*: history is always a hypothetical model, which links the vestiges of the past to the present. Consequently, history is always due to revisions and modifications, which change our perceptions of the past. It is therefore possible to transform or to correct pictures of Jesus by referring to sources, not noticed or not known so far, or to confront the familiar material with new insights. The idea of getting behind the texts to the reality itself would, however, not be convincing. Trying to come closer to Jesus by figuring out his words or deeds and arranging them with colours according to their historical probability, neglects that doing history is always a hermeneutical enterprise that can reach a certain degree of probability, but that will never arrive at certainty. There is no reality, which could be stripped of from the sources; there are no data without interpretation. History is, instead, always a hypothesis about how it *could have been*.

In the second part of this paper, I want to exemplify these remarks by looking at the historical context of Jesus and its treatment in contemporary research.

2. *Jesus—a Jew from Galilee*

One of the main achievements of the newly inaugurated quest for the historical Jesus is the integration of literary and archaeological sources in the descriptions of Jesus' activity and fate. This has not led, however, to a more coherent picture. To the contrary, it has become obvious that the images of Jesus and his environment drawn by different scholars depend on the considered material, on sociological theories used to interpret ancient societies, and in some instances also on presuppositions about the historical value of non-canonical sources. In the following remarks I will concentrate on only one aspect, which has become a controversial issue in recent discussion, namely the adequate description of the context of Jesus' activity. I take my starting point by a sketch of two different approaches to this question.

According to John Dominic Crossan's monumental Jesus book, Jesus' activity should be interpreted against the background of the relationship of oppressive urban elites (patrons) and an oppressed rural population (clients) as the formative structure of ancient Mediterranean

societies (Crossan 1991). Jesus challenged this system by proclaiming an unbrokered kingdom of God, which he made accessible through common meals open to everyone. The symbolic destruction of the temple, according to Crossan a symbol of the patronal system, which contradicted the spiritual and economic egalitarianism Jesus had preached in Galilee, led to his arrest and execution. The model for explaining Jesus' behaviour within the ancient Mediterranean world for Crossan is the cynic philosopher, whereas it is of only secondary importance to place him within Judaism.

The approach of Ed Parish Sanders is quite different (Sanders 1985; 1993). In his view, Jesus can only be interpreted against the background of Jewish religion in general and the specific historical situation in Palestine and the Galilee in particular. In Sanders' view, Jesus did not violate the Jewish law, but he was convinced that God would restore his Kingdom in Israel very soon. His actions concerning the temple in Jerusalem—the driving out of the sellers and buyers, the overturning of the tables of the moneychangers, and the announcement of the destruction of the temple—are the climax and the safest historical event for a reconstruction of Jesus' activity. The Jerusalem actions are expressions of Jesus' self-understanding as a charismatic prophet who acted entirely within the Jewish religion. Accordingly, his arrest and execution did not result from conflicts about his teaching. Instead, with his radical eschatology and his claim that access to God's kingdom would be possible only by following him, he endangered his own people by becoming politically suspicious. In this situation, the high priest in Jerusalem, who was responsible for the maintenance of the public order, gave the command to arrest Jesus and to deliver him to the Romans.

The approaches of Crossan and Sanders are the extreme opposites of the present discussion about Jesus' position within his historical context. On the one hand, there is the revolutionary, who challenges the social structure of the Mediterranean world, and whose teaching resembles that of a cynic philosopher more than that of a Galilean Jew. On the other hand, there is the Jewish prophet who looks forward to God's reign drawing near and who expects to play a decisive role in the eschatological events connected with God's eternal judgement. Both interpretations are confronted with specific difficulties. With regard to Crossan's model the question arises of whether the Mediterranean philosopher can be reconciled with the

Galilean itinerant preacher, a problem, which can especially be seen in the book co-authored by Crossan and Reed referred to above. As Sean Freyne has pointed out, the problem of this book is that according to Crossan's perspective it would be difficult to locate Jesus' activity anywhere in particular, because his teaching as reconstructed by Crossan could have originated at almost every place in the Mediterranean world (Freyne 2000, 209). The problem of Sanders' perspective on the other hand is that it becomes difficult to explain why Jesus' message was so provocative for his Jewish contemporaries if he did not violate the Jewish law. The conflict stories of the Gospels seem to point in another direction, namely that Jesus' claim to be God's decisive representative for most of the Jews was not compatible with their own religious ideas. Whether his execution was mainly the result of political considerations, as Sanders seems to suggest, can therefore be questioned.

Against this background, I want to look closer at the historical context of Jesus' activity. In general, this context can be described as the Jewish environment of Palestine or, more precisely, of Galilee. For a more detailed description, it is necessary to differentiate between the general characteristics of Judaism in the Second Temple period—what Sanders has called "common Judaism"—on the one hand and the specifics of Galilean Judaism on the other. Parts of the former are the belief in one God, the Temple as the hub of political and religious life, and the belief in the Holy Scriptures, especially the Torah, in which Israel's election was assured and which contained the instructions for social and ethical behaviour.

Besides these common characteristics, first century Judaism was a multifaceted phenomenon. As more recent investigations have shown, the Jewish scriptures of the Hellenistic-Roman period reveal different perspectives on such fundamental issues like interpretation of the law, openness to the non-Jewish environment or God's activity at the end of time. We can detect sapiential, priestly or apocalyptic inspired positions. Some of them can be assigned to the parties we know from Josephus, namely the Pharisees, the Sadducees or the Essenes. Nonetheless, taken together, these writings show a multiplicity of Judaism, which goes beyond these groups.

Jesus' activity must be interpreted against the background of Judaism as such a complex phenomenon. With regard to Galilee, it is necessary to look first at the history of the region. As a consequence

of the Assyrian conquest, Galilee, unlike Samaria, remained mostly devastated until Persian times. The decisive event for Jesus' Galilee was the occupation of the territory in the Maccabean period, more precisely, under the first Maccabean king Aristobulus.

At the end of the second century BC, Aristobulus conquered Galilee and integrated it into the Jewish territory. As a consequence, Jews increasingly populated the territory, whereas other groups—Greeks, Phoenicians, Itureans—left the region. This was exposed convincingly by recent archaeological excavations which are the basis of the descriptions of Galilee e.g. by Jonathan Reed (2000) and Mark Chancey (2002). In the following time, because of its Jewish character, Galilee was firmly oriented towards Judea, Jerusalem and the temple. There can be no doubt, therefore, that Galilee, although its Judaism had its own characteristics, was predominantly Jewish, and that the idea of a “gentile Galilee” should with Mark Chancey be abandoned as a refuted scholarly myth.

In the following time, the Jewish ethos of Galilee was respected by Roman as well as by Herodian rulers. Pompey in his famous reorganization of the East reduced the Jewish territory by separating it from Samaria, the Phoenician coast as well as from the Hellenistic cities in the East, joining the latter together to the so-called “Decapolis”. Remarkably, however, the traditional Jewish areas, including Galilee, remained under Maccabean power. Jewish and Gentile areas were kept separate and treated differently also in Herodian times. Rome did not station soldiers in the kingdom of Herod the Great or later in the tetrarchies of Archelaus and Antipas.

Consequently, in the time of Jesus there was no Roman army in Galilee (Safrai 1992; Sanders 2002, 9–13). Herod the Great did not build pagan temples in Galilee, and also Antipas cherished the Jewish territories. He did not mint coins bearing either his own image or that of the Roman emperor. His coins, instead, bore Jewish symbols like palm trees or reeds.

The two Galilean cities, Sepphoris and Tiberias, were remarkably smaller and less urbanized than the surrounding cities in the Gentile areas (Reed 2000, 77–93, 117–131). Sepphoris, only 4 miles northwest of Nazareth, was a primarily Jewish city, as is indicated by coins, stone vessels, mikwaot, as well as by references in Josephus and the rabbinic materials. Even the population of Tiberias, which was founded around 19 CE on the top of a Jewish cemetery, according to Josephus was predominantly Jewish.

Pointing to the Jewish character of Jesus' Galilee should not lead, however, to a renewal of the antagonism between Judaism and Hellenism or to maintain an opposition between urban and rural milieus. Galilee was linked to the surrounding areas by important trade routes (Chancey 2002, 157–160). One branch of the *via maris*, one of the Roman main roads, connecting Alexandria in Egypt with the Phoenician coast and Syria, cut across Galilee, passing through Sepphoris and Tiberias. The two other branches of this route, which ran from the West to the East, connecting the *via maris* with the King's Highway, bypassed Galilee to the South and to the North. Whereas these major roads served to facilitate international trade and travel, and not at least the movement of Roman troops, the villages of Galilee were connected by a road system, which smoothed the way of trade relations. Ceramics from Kefar Hanania, at the boundary between Upper and Lower Galilee according to Rabbinic traditions, were exported as far as to the Mediterranean coast. Other export wares included olive oil and fish from the Sea of Galilee. To the imported items belonged e.g. parchment, papyrus, jewellery, and marble. The two lead weights from Tiberias bearing Greek inscriptions, which mention the city's *agoranomoi* (market officials), as well as the *agora* and the *cardo* and *decumanus* from Sepphoris reveal Hellenistic and Roman influence.

Another aspect is the political and socio-economic situation of Galilee in the time of Antipas. In recent decades it was sometimes argued that the region was characterized by unrests and revolts against the Romans. This is improbable already with regard to the situation described above, namely, that the Roman army did not arrive before 120 CE. Moreover, the picture of a revolutionary Galilee serving as a foil for Jesus' activity, results from a rather uncritical reading of Josephus who gives the impression of a historical connection of the Galilean turmoil after the death of Herod the Great with the revolutionary sentiment in the time of the Jewish-Roman war 66–70 CE. Such a projection, however, overlooks the fact that Antipas' reign was a relatively quiet and economically prosperous period (Freyne 1980, 68–71). There are no reports about uprisings in Galilee between 4 BC and the time of the Jewish-Roman war. The economic situation in Antipas' time was characterized by his building projects of Sepphoris and Tiberias, which in all probability provided employment for many Galilean inhabitants. Even if that meant a state of deprivation for Galilean peasants, it would be an

exaggeration, to say the least, to maintain that poverty and oppression of the Galilean rural population are the background of Jesus' message.

To summarize: although the Gospels do not provide much information about Galilee, on the basis of epigraphic, numismatic and literary evidence, the region of Jesus' origin can be described in more detail. Despite of its predominantly Jewish character, going back to the Maccabean conquest, the region was not isolated from the surrounding territories. Greek language and architecture, especially in the cities of Lower Galilee, show a certain degree of Hellenization of this Jewish territory. Moreover, Galilee was integrated into a well-developed road network. The reports of the Gospels about Jesus' encounters outside Galilee—in the coastal region or in the Decapolis—are historically plausible against this background. The reason for visiting these regions was probably not Jesus' desire to convert pagans, even if the Gospel of Mark seems to suggest such a scenario, but rather Jesus' orientation towards the whole Israel. That Jesus' message is centred on the symbol "Kingdom of God" points to the renewal of Israel, which should be announced also to those Jews living outside the Jewish territory. Jesus' interest in proclaiming his message in Jerusalem, the heart of the political and religious life of Judaism, points in the same direction. The significance of this city in the Gospels provides a curious contrast to the avoidance of the Galilean towns and can therefore scarcely be explained by a rural-urban antagonism. Rather, it should be regarded as a consequence of his message of a renewed Israel, which was not in the first place oriented politically, but rather focused on the battle between God's kingdom and that of Satan. Obviously, it was Jesus' self-understanding that he as God's messenger had to fight this battle on earth and to proclaim the ethics of a life according to God's will.

If we return to the beginning of this paragraph, it can first be stated that the interdisciplinary dialogue about Jesus' Galilee is an important contribution to contemporary Jesus research. This aspect was almost entirely neglected in the so-called "new quest", which was interested primarily in Jesus' message, expressed in his words and parables. The major achievement of the newly inaugurated interest in Jesus' historical environment, in particular in the Judaism of the Second Temple period in its Galilean provenance, is therefore that it describes Jesus' activity much more detailed than it was the case in the decades before. Jesus' words and parables are not to be

regarded as a message beyond time and place, but as concrete encouragements, exhortations and invitations, which can be adequately understood only by interpreting them against their historical background, which must of course be constructed by the historian, as I argued in the first part of this paper.

With regard to the approaches of Crossan and Sanders, mentioned at the beginning of this section, our considerations have resulted in a picture, which is closer to Sanders' model than to Crossan's. Jesus has to be interpreted within the circumstances of first century Galilee, whereas the contours of the Mediterranean world as depicted by Crossan rather seem to blur the concrete conditions of his surroundings. That Jesus' message was concentrated above all on the renewal of Israel, that his fight was directed primarily against Satan and the demons who tortured the people, and only secondarily, if at all, against a political and religious elite, comes to the fore if one interprets his activity against the background of first-century Galilean Judaism. This perspective coheres much better with the historical material—the literary texts of the Gospels, the historical data about Galilee's history, and the epigraphic and numismatic evidence, than a model, which deals with the general framework of the Mediterranean world.

3. *The remembered Jesus and the beginnings of Christianity*

My remarks started with considerations concerning the relationship of the construction of history and historical Jesus research. I argued that writing history is always a creative venture, relying on "constructive imagination" and aiming at a better understanding of the present. In contemporary Jesus research its character as a historical discipline was—in my view rightly—frequently emphasized. Less attention was drawn, however, to the epistemological question of what that means for Jesus portraits outlined on the basis of the available sources. Let me conclude with some comments trying to bind together the preceding reflections.

First, as I hope to have shown in my remarks about Jesus' Galilee, it is crucial to collect all the available material and to interpret it critically. Sometimes one cannot avoid the impression that in some recent approaches Albert Schweitzer's warning not to merge the present and the past uncritically was not taken to heart very seriously.

Sometimes Jesus' environment was constructed rather uncritically by either creating an image of the Mediterranean world, characterized by the tension of patron and client, or a rebellious Galilee, serving as a foil for a revolutionary Jesus. Neither of these models, however, stands up to closer scrutiny.

To regard history as creative imagination does not mean, consequently, that the historical material would be open to every interpretation. To the contrary, the remains from the past control and limit the possibilities of constructing history, separating historiography from poetry. But as Reinhard Koselleck wrote already many years ago, the sources do not tell us what we have to say. They rather hinder us to make claims, which we are not allowed to make. The sources, therefore, have a power of veto. They prohibit interpretations, which are not supported by the historical data. They protect us from misconstructions, but they do not tell us what we have to say (Koselleck 1979, 206). This sounds like a very appropriate description of the work of a historian.

Finally, what does that mean for the relationship of the historical Jesus and the origin of Christian faith? On the one hand, it is the task of the historical Jesus scholar to explain the early Christian writings as reactions to the activity and fate of Jesus of Nazareth. This should prevent us from driving too sharp a wedge between Jesus and the Christian faith and explain the latter essentially as originating from Easter faith. On the other hand, the historical material allows the construction of more images of Jesus than those depicted by the Gospels. Historical Jesus research can therefore contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the shape of Christianity in a multifaceted world by pointing out both the range and the limits of historical Jesus portraits, which are historically plausible. It would be a misapprehension to describe the task of historical Jesus research as painting the one "true" image of Jesus. Rather, it is the remembered Jesus, whom we meet already in the earliest narratives and to whom we should draw our attention also under the circumstances of our present situations.

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MULTIPLE REALITIES AND HISTORIOGRAPHY: RETHINKING HISTORICAL JESUS RESEARCH

Pieter F. Craffert

ABSTRACT

This article consists of two parts. In the first part the shift from traditional or positivist to postmodern historiography is discussed. It is argued that the recognition of multiple realities and the acceptance of some form of pluralism are the strongest forces in the design of a version of postmodern historiography which is not subject to the extreme forms of postmodernism where even the historical object is negated. One such version, anthropological historiography, is presented as a framework for dealing with culturally alien historical records. In the second part it is suggested that much of current historical Jesus research is trapped in the framework of traditional historiography. The aim remains to answer the research questions, and by means of the interpretive strategies, formulated more than a century ago in a positivistic historiographical paradigm. From the point of view of anthropological historiography the research question is altered to: "About what kind of cultural personage such stories were told and remembered as we have in the documentary data?", while the research strategy focuses on an attempt to deal in a cultural sensitive manner with the strange, alien and exotic data presented about Jesus as such a cultural figure. In this view Jesus of Nazareth as well as the documents connected to his life are treated as cultural artefacts belonging to an alien and distant cultural system.

1. *Introduction*

Having grown up in the computer era, my daughter's reaction upon seeing a typewriter for the first time was, "Look, an antique computer!" She had no idea that there is a *reality* of office machines prior to and besides that of computers and had to learn that present-mindedness, the taken-for-granted way of looking at the world, can easily result in an embarrassing misrepresentation. This is to suggest that something similar happened to the way we think about reality

in the Western tradition that altered the gist and agenda of what historians discuss about their trade and tools. This is so, because, as Schinkel (2004, 55) says: "The way one thinks about reality has implications for the way one thinks about knowledge and truth. Ontology and epistemology are not philosophical islands, completely isolated, exerting no influence upon each other. On the contrary: epistemology and ontology support one another."

What happened was a recognition of the plurality of worlds (or, the acceptance of pluralism as a fundamental element of our world-view). For historians it meant the recognition that the historical record, like the record of contemporary cultures for other scientists, contains data from worlds alien, strange and exotic compared to that of the average Western scholar. The recognition of a plurality of world-views, or the existence of multiple cultural and historical realities, has had a fundamental impact on the way historians think about what they do and how they do it. The "transformation of consciousness" as Iggers (1997, 6) refers to this change in historical thinking, resulted in the adoption of new modes of historical inquiry and alternative interpretive strategies where the alien, the strange and the exotic are encountered in the historical record. In an atmosphere of postmodern pluralism, reflection about historiography and historical knowledge takes on a different shape than in a monistic, modernistic one. Traditional dichotomies of objectivity and subjectivity and realism and idealism are resituated. Therefore, it is necessary to first look at the world of multiple realities.

2. *The world of pluralism and multiple realities*

Lategan (2004, 135) says, "[w]e live in a time of an increased awareness of the existence of multiple realities and of a growing need to understand how these realities originate and how they relate". Current debates in historiography and the theory of historical knowledge can be seen as a struggle to come to terms with this fact.

Western thinking, Bernstein (1991, 306) shows, has been caught in an ontological predicament which has haunted it for centuries, "where ontology never gets beyond the problematic of 'the Same and the Other' and always seeks to show how the other can be mastered, absorbed, reduced to the same". Within such a framework, to be referred to as "ontological monism", other world-views or cultural

realities are disallowed the ontological status of *reality* and everything which does not fit the own ontology is regarded as primitive, mythical, fictional or not real. Within such an atmosphere both scientific positivism and idealist subjectivism flourished in determining the single nature of reality.

However, things have changed about the way we think about the world. One feature common to many thinkers today is the acceptance of some form of relativism, or a “celebration of contingency, fragmentation, fissures, singularity, plurality, and raptures . . .” (Bernstein 1991, 307). Characteristic of the present movement, often referred to as “postmodernism”, is

a willingness to emphasise the importance of the local and the contingent, a desire to underline the extent to which our own concepts and attitudes have been shaped by particular historical circumstances, and a corresponding dislike—amounting almost to hatred in the case of Wittgenstein—of all overarching theories and singular schemes of explanation (Skinner 1985, 12).

Since pluralism is open to many interpretations, it became necessary to qualify how it is to be understood because “not everything goes”. Among historians, Rüsen (1993, 56) rejects “lazy pluralism” and suggests a pluralism as “a discursive relationship between different historical perspectives” while Iggers (1997, 140) argues for an “expanded pluralism”.¹ Bernstein (1991, 336) designs what is called “engaged fallibilistic pluralism”:

For it means taking our own fallibility seriously—resolving that however much we are committed to our own style of thinking, we are willing to listen to others without denying or suppressing the otherness of the other. It means being vigilant against the dual temptations of simply dismissing what others are saying by falling back on one of those standard defensive ploys where we condemn it as obscure, woolly, or trivial, or thinking

¹ Bernstein (1991, 335–336) suggests that some important distinctions are made: “For there is the danger of fragmenting pluralism where the centrifugal forces become so strong that we are only able to communicate with the small group that already shares our own biases, and no longer even experience the need to talk with others outside of this circle. There is flabby pluralism where our borrowings from different orientations are little more than glib superficial poaching. There is polemical pluralism where the appeal to pluralism doesn’t signify genuine willingness to listen and learn from others, but becomes rather an ideological weapon to advance one’s own orientation. There is defensive pluralism, a form of tokenism, where we pay lip service to others ‘doing their own thing’ but are already convinced that there is nothing important to be learned from them.”

we can always easily translate what is alien into our own entrenched vocabularies.²

It should be realised that the recognition of the fundamental plurality of worlds and realities already includes a rejection of the “myth of the framework”.³ As human beings, we are not imprisoned in our frameworks and the failure to find ways of escaping them is an ethical and not a cognitive or linguistic one (see Bernstein 1991, 336). Instead, it emphasises the need for practical ways of encountering the other and the alien but without pressing our standards onto them.

Against the notion of a world-view driven by ontological monism historians have realised that the “multiplicity and heterogeneity of the cultural creations of the human spirit allowed only for an incomplete historical interpretation from the perspective of a quasi-natural faculty of reason” (Rüsen 1993, 227). For we “who use life stories need to understand, and more precisely identify how, whether mythic or realistic, poetic or phlegmatic, they always have to be structured, according to known conventions, in order to convey the desire—fearful, hortatory, or ironic—of this teller to present a self to this listener, at this particular moment” (Tonkin 1990, 27, 34). Iggers (1997, 16) points out that the “postmodern critique of traditional science and traditional historiography has offered important correctives to historical thought and practice. It has not destroyed the historian’s commitment to recapturing reality or his or her belief in a logic of inquiry, *but it has demonstrated the complexity of both*” (italics mine). For this reason, historians are no longer concerned “with explanation but with ‘explication,’ the attempt to reconstruct the significance of the social expressions that serve as its texts” (1997, 14). This is the backdrop to the present reflection about historiography and historical knowledge and the aim is to show the complexity of these.

² Lorenz (1998, 350) refers to the insights of fallibilism and contextualism in the following way: “Contextualists recognize that all knowledge is relative to specific epistemic claims. And fallibilists recognize that all claims to knowledge are corrigible, and assume a hypothetical character, because there is no firm foundation of knowledge. . . .”

³ The “myth of the framework” is a term used by Popper (1970, 56) to describe the human condition of being imprisoned in our language and categories: “I do admit that at any moment we are prisoners caught in the framework of our theories; our expectations; our past experiences; our language. But we are prisoners in a Pickwickian sense: if we try, we can break out of our framework at any time.”

3. *What historians do and how they do it*

Fay (1998, 11) suggests that as opposed to extreme forms in both positivistic and postmodern historiography, there appeared what can be described as “a dialectical middle ground” in historical studies. Without some insight into the old dichotomies that characterised reflection about historiography and historical knowledge, it would be difficult to know what this entails.

3.1. *Traditional elements in historians’ presuppositional toolkits*

The first set of elements contains views with regard to the outside world, or ontology. The traditional spectrum includes realism and idealism. The basic presupposition of *realism* is that reality exists independently of our knowledge thereof. In its naive version, it maintains that reality is just like our constructions or descriptions of it. As opposed to realism, *idealism* maintains that humans cannot perceive or make sense of the world independently of their existing understanding of things and therefore, what is real only exists in the mind (see Rorty 1981; Tosh 1984, 110–111; Trigger 1998, 3, 5–6).

The second set describes assumptions with regard to the relationship between language and reality. Historians are not the only scholars encountering this dilemma because it has been a feature of Western thinking for centuries. The two recurring patterns show

approaches which focus on the reality which language can reveal to those approaches which feature the rhetorical devices which language employs. . . . In the former, language is something to be looked *through* to the Real, the given, the found; in the latter, language is something to be looked *at* as something which creates or structures what is called Real. The first attitude sees language as a means for getting to or connecting with what is extralinguistic; the second attitude sees language as the means by which meaningful reality is constituted. The former is referent-oriented; the latter is text-oriented (Fay 1998, 3).

It resulted in what Fish (1990, 208) promotes as *homo serious and homo rhetoricus*, or what Fay (1998, 3) identifies as the “Scientific Attitude” (expressed in various forms of positivism) and the “Rhetorical Attitude” (expressed in postmodern versions) in historical studies. More often than not, these are seen as exclusive categories.⁴

⁴ As Fish (1990, 221) remarks: “But it would seem, from the evidence marshalled in this essay, that something is always happening to the way we think, and that it

Given these categories as the language by means of which historians, like their colleagues in the human and social sciences, have developed particular theoretical positions with regard to their subject matter, it would be helpful to look at some of these patterns more closely.

3.2. *The history of historiography*

Historians write history (historiography) and, in doing so, produce historical knowledge. However, historiography itself has a history. What and how they have been doing it have changed over the years. The history of historiography can, however, be analysed in terms of the assumptions and attitudes of historians. Although there never was a single version of traditional historiography and there is no unified postmodern historiography today, certain patterns have emerged which were the product of specific configurations of the above components.

3.2.1. From positivist to postmodern historiography

In his overview of the historiography of the 20th century, Iggers (see 1997, 3) shows that it can be presented by means of three phases. The scientific basis of traditional historiography emerged during the 19th century and shared the optimism of the sciences that methodologically controlled research makes objective knowledge possible. This phase is characterised by assumptions about reality (such as a correspondence theory of truth), intentionality (human actions mirror the intentions of the actors) and temporal sequence (such as, that later events follow earlier ones in a coherent sequence).⁵

Traditional historiography which has emphasised that reliable objective knowledge of the past is the aim of historical activity, is to be

is always the same thing, a tug-of-war between two views of human life and possibilities, no one of which can ever gain complete and lasting ascendancy because in the very moment of its triumphant articulation each turns back in the direction of the other."

⁵ Rüsen (1993, 168) describes this mode of historical thinking in the following way: "This *idealistic concept of history* bases the dominant perspectives of the human past on the intentional motivating powers of human actions; history appears as the inner coherence of actions which change the world and are based on 'ideas', on intentions which lead to actions, and on subjects which employ actions to give meaning to their world and themselves."

found in the interplay between naive realism and objectivism. In the first half of the 20th century it shared with other sciences a broad positivistic attitude that reality is directly knowable by means of a correct method (see Fay 1998, 2) while a good deal of naive realism, which assumed that the historian simply discover *how things were*, accompanied it (see Tosh 1984, 111–117). They “know things ‘straight’” as Wright (1992, 33) expresses this attitude. The basic task of the historian in this paradigm can be described as a *realist factuality* or a *factual recreation or recovery of the past*.

This is nowhere better illustrated than by what Tonkin (1990, 25) refers to as the “myth of realism”. That is, assuming the natural veracity of any narrative, or the view that historians who use the recollections of others can “just scan them for useful facts to pick out, like currants from a cake”. It is using documents as “transparent narrative or a quarry for facts”. When coupled with a monistic view of the world, which does not pay attention to the multiple views of reality, documents and data are treated as if they are readily transparent to the modern *scientific* researcher. Present-minded history, as Tosh (1984, 120) refers to traditional historiography, “exhibits a tendency to underestimate the differences between past and present—to project modern ways of thought backwards in time and to discount those aspects of past experience which are alien to modern ideas”.

Naive realism, an assumption that things are objectively there, and ontological monism often go hand in hand with this notion of the natural veracity of narratives. In practice, it results in what Carr (1961, 16) calls “a fetishism of documents . . . If you find it in the documents, it is so”. It is under the pressure of postmodern historiography that the naive realism, positivism and objectivism of traditional historiography have been undermined.

Iggers’s second phase, social science-oriented history, challenged traditional historiography on fundamental assumptions (such as a too narrow focus on individuals and *great men*), but “the basic assumptions remained intact” (1997, 3). One of its advantages, however, was the emphasis on social structures and processes of change.

It was the emergence of “the new cultural history” which developed over the last few decades of the previous century, however, that really introduced a new paradigm in historiography, he says. “Postmodern historiography”, as this phase is often called, is a replacement of a “soulless fact-oriented positivism” (Iggers and Von Moltke 1973, xii). However, it would be a mistake to take postmodern

historiography as a single thing because it went through a number of phases itself in which attention was first drawn only to the rhetorical features of history but ended in a full-scale questioning of the nature of history as a discipline or way to knowledge. Today, post-modern historiography consists of a wide spectrum of positions that all share only one feature, namely, the rejection of the essential features of positivistic or traditional historiography.

The one version, which self-consciously adopted the label of "post-modern historiography", can be seen as an exponent of an idealist-subjectivism historiography which doubts the possibility of reliable historical knowledge and comes close to the point of even denying that historical writings refer to an actual historical past, or, as it were, a denial of reality (see Iggers 1997, 118; Lorenz 1998, 349). This viewpoint, rightly or wrongly, is strongly associated with Hayden White and Frank Ankersmit who focus on narrative and its accompanying assumptions as a mode of historiography.

That is, they highlighted the ways historians select events to figure in a narrative account (indeed, how incidents become historical events only by being brought within a narrative framework); how historians assign significance to events by placing them into a narrative context; and how historians themselves (rather than Reality) decide the basic form which a narrative will take (Fay 1998, 5).

This is explicit in Ankersmit's (1989, 137) claim that "we no longer have any texts, any past, but just interpretations of them". For that reason, he says, history is like art and unlike science: "In the post-modernist view, the focus is no longer on the past itself, but on the incongruity between present and past, between the language we presently use for speaking about the past and the past itself" (1989, 153).⁶ It is under the influence of this position that NT scholars object to the "reconstruction of the past" and argue in favour of the "construction of history".⁷

⁶ Unlike what his more scientifically minded critics claim, Ankersmit (1989, 153) does not reject scientific historiography. "Postmodernism does not reject scientific historiography, but only draws our attention to the modernists' vicious circle which would have us believe that nothing exists outside it." It is, however, difficult not to agree with them that once the existence of the past has been given up, it is no longer possible to maintain such a viewpoint (see Lorenz 1998, 350-354). It will be suggested that something more is needed than merely a disclaimer and something substantial is required in the theory of history by means of which the dialectical middle ground can be explored.

⁷ The construction-reconstruction debate in historiography finds its parallel in anthropological studies in the ethnocentrism versus the avoidance of ethnocentrism

It should be obvious that each of these historiographical positions result in a unique agenda for the historian. Historians in the traditional paradigm try to recover the past straight, while postmodern historians in the deepest corner of the subjective-idealist quarter, merely concern themselves with moral rhetoric or describe the aim of historical research as the construction of history in contrast to the reconstruction of the past.⁸

3.2.2. Pushing a good case too far

In the extreme postmodern position, Stanford (1986, 135) suggests, “a good case has been carried too far”. The implications for history of the viewpoint “that denies its inherent rationality and sees it as a form of moral rhetoric . . . are, it is gradually becoming clear, profoundly conservative and undemocratic” (Evans 2002, 86). The “Rhetorical Attitude” is well suited for burning down edifices (the constructs of scientific historiography which are all equally rhetorical and preliminary) but less well suited for building up alternative structures (see Fay 1998, 4). The unmasking of naive realism or objectivism does not necessarily mean a total rejection of realism or the abandonment of the aim of objective historical knowledge.

Burke (1992, 129) points out that it is a pity that the promoters of this version of the postmodern position

have not yet seriously engaged with the question whether history is a literary genre or cluster of genres of its own, whether it has its own form of narratives and its own rhetoric, and whether the conventions include (as they sure do) rules about the relation of statements to evidence as well as rules of representation. Ranke, for example, was not writing pure fiction. Documents not only supported his narrative, but constrained the narrator not to make statements for which evidence was lacking.⁹

debate (see Craffert 1996b) and in literary studies in the discovery or creation of meaning debate (see Craffert 1996a, 58–63).

⁸ Schröter (2002, 167) argues for a “Konstruktion von Geschichte” and not a “Rekonstruktion der Vergangenheit”, while Du Toit (2002, 121) suggests that a reconstruction is an illusion because the only option is “in reflektierender Verantwortung angesichts der fragmentarischen Quellen Geschichte in einem kreativen Akt zu konstruieren”. As will become clear below, it is unfortunate that they contrast construction with a caricature (or at least outdated positivistic) view of reconstruction as recovery of the past (“wiedergewinnen”), resurrection of the past (“wirklichkeitsgetreu wieder-auf-er-ster-hen”) or recovery of the past (“eine Wiederherstellung der Vergangenheit”).

⁹ For a criticism of some of the tacit assumptions of this idealist postmodern position, see the discussion of Lorenz (1998, 353–358).

Is the above-described postmodern historiography not a continuation of ontological monism in a different guise where only a single reality, or reality-creating agent, is recognised? While subjectivity and idealism are emphasised as the main features of postmodern historiography, the suggestion of this study is that the constituting feature of the postmodern is the recognition of multiple realities and the acknowledgement of the plurality of viewpoints. It is this feature that provides the theoretical challenges for a postmodern theory of historiography and for the nature of historical knowledge.

If history is only what is written, what is created by historians, “then all elements of the historical field are equally real, since the real minds of historians create them” (Stanford 1986, 34). The very notion of only looking at the communication of documents or the construction of historians displays a disregard for the singularity of the past together with an instance of the myth of the framework. The stronger we insist that we can only see from our perspectives, the stronger the commitment should be to recognise the same feature in others—be that people from other cultures or eras. Ironically, traditional and extreme postmodern historiographies both share a version of the myth of the framework (the subjectivity of the interpreter) as well as the notion of ontological monism. Consequently, both fall into the trap of the myth of realism in thinking that the historical record can be read *straight*.

The recognition of plurality as a fundamental feature of the present world-view has, in a sense, debunked the either- or position of realism and idealism. It is no longer a question whether ontological monism is inadequate, but how to deal with cultural plurality.

3.3. *Historians do it in dialogue with the past*

There seems to be very broad agreement that “[t]o be true to itself, the discipline of history must invoke both its scientific dimension and its rhetorical dimension” (Fay 1998, 8).¹⁰ Instead of destroying the

¹⁰ Like all other social scientists, historians face a dilemma when doing their job: “The dilemma of historians is that they want to see the past ‘as it actually was’ but can see it only through the medium of their own and other people’s ideas . . .” (Stanford 1986, 27). Or, as Rüsen (1993, 50) says, there are “two essential qualities of historical studies” which seem to exclude each other. These are, on the one hand, their claim to objective truth or the ideal to show how things were and, on the other hand, the realisation that history depends on the historian’s involvement in the past.

opposite viewpoint, scholars are trying to deal with the complexity of keeping together different essential features. Therefore, much of the scholarly discussion in historiography nowadays focuses on maintaining the advantages of both viewpoints.

While most historians today realise the dangers and inadequacies of traditional historiography and have even adopted much of the postmodern criticism, they have not opted for the radical postmodern position represented above. Instead, there is a strong movement towards the formulation of the task of the historian and the nature of historical knowledge, which grapples with the complexity of these issues.¹¹ Therefore, based on the above discussion, a postmodern historiography can be formulated which is not extreme; which is, in a sense, beyond the traditional approach and the extreme postmodern one but not in the sense of only being a third option against these—it is an alternative option because it reconfigures the elements in view of the acceptance of plurality.¹² Historians in these circles struggle with at least three issues.

3.3.1. Representation and misrepresentation

Firstly, most historians have learned that a naive realism and the claim of a one-to-one referentiality (or representation of reality) are no longer tenable. However, that does not mean they think realism is to be abandoned or referentiality is to be sacrificed. Historians have learned that science and history are both representational but “not a simulacrum of reality” because “no matter how veridical a representation is, it is still a representation: a facsimile of reality and not reality itself . . .” (Fay 1998, 8).¹³ Many historians, nowadays, are

¹¹ As Tosh (1984, 119) puts it: “Paradoxically there is an element of present-mindedness about all historical inquiry. The problem, of course, is to determine at what point present-mindedness conflicts with the historian’s aspirations to be true to the past.”

¹² Bernstein (see 1983, 230–231) argues that the movement beyond the “Cartesian Anxiety” (objectivism and relativism) does not mean bypassing either of them or neglecting them, but implies a commitment to solidarity, participation and mutual recognition that deals with these in dialogue.

¹³ This point has been well made by Haskell (see 1998, 315) in a parable about maps. A map is not a territory and when we want to go to, say, Paris, we know perfectly well maps can help and we also know that some maps are better than others. We also know none of the maps actually is Paris. Or, in the words of Lorenz (1998, 366–367): “Historians themselves claim to represent the past and thus subscribe to the ‘reality-rule’; the mere fact that the past is only known by us through a frame of description therefore does not entail the conclusion that the past is a description. . . .”

comfortable in subscribing to *realism* without being victims of naive realism (see Stanford 1986, 26; Lorenz 1998, 351).¹⁴ Pluralism affirms the existence and reality of alien and distant pasts; just as the alien and distant present is acknowledged as outside and different to the interpreter.

From this perspective, a distinction between the “two meanings of the word ‘history’—between history as what actually happened and history as a collective *representation* of what happened” (Tosh 1984, 18) makes sense. This distinction allows for the formulation of the task of the historian as a dialogue with the past: “To be sure every historical account is a construct, but a construct arising from a dialogue between the historian and the past, one that does not occur in a vacuum but within a community of inquiring minds who share criteria of plausibility” (Iggers 1997, 145).¹⁵ History is about *history*.

Discovery of the past therefore is not objective in the sense of recreating the past. That is impossible, but in the sense of a reconstruction as approximation (see Iggers 1997, 145). Once it is accepted that history as representation of the past can never be a recreation or recovery of that past event or phenomenon, then it is unnecessary to avoid the term *reconstruction*. Construction too often carries the notion of the historian *creating* the past. Reconstruction realises it is only an approximation of the past reality with an open invitation of correcting such reconstructions.

From this perspective, the task of historians can be described by means of the two sides of a coin: on the one hand, the ideal of recovering the past and, on the other hand, showing up falsifications.

This distinction between truth and falsehood remains fundamental to the work of the historian. The concept of truth has become immeasurably more complex in the course of recent critical thought. . . . Nevertheless the concept of truth and with it the duty of the historian to avoid and to uncover falsification has by no means been abandoned. As a trained professional he continues to work critically with the sources that make access to the past reality possible (Iggers 1997, 12).

¹⁴ Realism does not say how things are, only that there is a way that they are. It is like distant galaxies, which remain beyond our reach but not beyond the possibility of our knowing them better (see Searle 1995, 155).

¹⁵ For three equally complex explanations of how the historical process of dealing with both interests and objectivity, with evidence and interests, at the same time, see Stanford (1986, 138–142), Rüsen (1993, 52–59) and Lorenz (1998, 358–367).

It remains the task of historians to “recover some of our losses from the past” as Stanford (1986, 50) expresses it. At the same time, the historian is constantly on the lookout for forgery or falsification (either of the sources or of representations). Again, this aim does not claim absolute truth or knowledge. In practice, this philosophical position shifts the task and focus of historians away from the problem of foundations for knowledge but to the issue of argumentation of claims to fallible knowledge (see Lorenz 1998, 350). This means “. . . when historians believe a particular fact about the past, they assume it provides accurate information about the world, even though they know (i) it is possible that the purported fact is not true, and (ii) we have no independent access to the world to know whether a particular description of the world is true” (McCullagh 2004, 26). In this view it is accepted that

[h]owever arbitrary historical explanation might be, it is nowhere near as arbitrary as such *ex cathedra* pronouncements of canonizations or anathemas. In the end, those who advocate, or practice, history merely as a form of moral rhetoric have no defence at all against those who disagree with them and practice a moral rhetoric of another kind, one which for example praises Hitler as a friend of the Jews, or damns Churchill as a warmonger and mass murderer (Evans 2002, 87).

Neither the communication of past texts nor a construction of history is possible without seeing the past as an *other* over and against the historian.

3.3.2. Widening the scope of historical research

Within these circles of postmodern historiography, historians have secondly widened the scope of their subject matter in more than one way. One is the shift from the actions of great men to other forms of historical thinking, such as, history of everyday life, micro history and cultural history (see Burke 1992, 38–43; Rüsen 1993, 170–180). The other was a recognition that cultural realities can constitute historical actions or realities. In this mode of historical thinking, which Rüsen (1993, 174) refers to as “societal history”, history “does not take place anymore on the level of intentional actions, but on the deeper level of structural conditions and presuppositions for actions”.

It takes seriously the cultural realities that are offered as expressions of the human spirit in its wide variety of forms. “The dark,

contrasting, strange, even exotic events, manners and forms of life are drawn into the attention of history”, Rüsen (1993, 210) says, where these achieve the status of cultural realities ready to be included in the historical project. However, the alien, the strange and the other can no longer be treated as the known, the common or the self as in the viewpoint of ontological monism. This is saying far more than that texts do not reflect reality in a one-to-one relationship—it is saying that distant texts could be treated as cultural artefacts or presentations of cultural realities that can no longer be evaluated by means of the god’s-eye view of a modern positivist world-view. The myth of realism, which maintains the natural veracity of historical documents, has been shattered with the recognition of multiple realities. It is no longer obvious what the exotic or the alien documents are all about; texts and artefacts are contextually and cultural bedded.

3.3.3. Beyond present-minded historiography

From this perspective, both traditional and extreme postmodern historiography deafen the historian to the language in which the people in the past formulated their concerns and, therefore, in the evaluation of documentary sources “before anything else can be achieved, the historian must try to enter the mental world of those who created the sources” (Tosh 1984, 116). One of the explicit features of the kind of historiography defended here consists of describing from the beginning the research problem and process in terms which take the cultural realities of the documents seriously.

Since present-mindedness can easily result in historical misrepresentations, its avoidance, therefore, manifests in (1) the adoption of cross-cultural interpretive strategies, (2) a reconceptualisation of the research process and problems, and (3) a re-evaluation of the issues of historicity.

- (1) One of the developments in historiography was the turn towards the methods of “Cultural Anthropology”, for example, that of “thick description” (see Burke 1992, 163; Rüsen 1993, 210; Iggers 1997, 124). Anthropology “can widen the possibilities, can help us take off our blinders, and give us a new place from which to view the past and discover the strange and surprising in the familiar landscape of historical texts”, Davis (1982, 275) points out. It is clearly no longer a question of what the sources say, but

of what they are asked, Rüsen (1993, 51) points out. At stake is whether they are asked culturally sensitive questions and treated as cultural artefacts in their own right—in short, whether they are recognised as an *other*.

- (2) In doing this, the historiographical project has to be re-conceptualised as a cross-cultural project, which allows room for the ultimate presuppositions and perspectives of *the other*. What historians have learned from anthropologists is that “people lead meaningful lives, and that these meanings can only be discovered within the context of those lives, it cannot be imputed to them on the basis of some previously established ideas about the biological or psychological makeup of people” (Cohn 1980, 201). Grasping their ultimate presuppositions, at the same time, implies a temporary moratorium on those of the interpreter. As Nipperdey (1978, 12) suggests: “It is part of the procedure of historians that they skilfully and critically distance themselves from their own presuppositions and perspectives” because “[a]ncient, medieval or pre-modern man [*sic*] behaved in a way that was completely different to what we are inclined to think on the basis of our own experience.”¹⁶ This is another way of saying that the myth of realism has to be avoided by treating cultural phenomena and events not as either myths or supernatural phenomena but to recognise their similarity to well-known human features as encountered by anthropologists today. It is also different from saying that the historian constructs history because there is no past to be discovered. The alien and distant past can only be discovered once a moratorium is placed on the own view of the world. Among others, anthropologists have opened our eyes for the possibility of breaking out of our frameworks. There is a certain spectrum of human behaviour and phenomena that does not allow representation without learning a “second first language”

¹⁶ Or in the formulation of Stanford (1986, 93), it recognises that the historian “must grasp the absolute presuppositions, the unspoken assumptions, of the society under review, in order to understand what has occurred”. Tosh (1984, 124–125) is more explicit in addressing the pragmatic steps historians are to take in order to lessen distortions and to overcome either present-mindedness or mere antiquarianism. That is, scrutinise his or her own assumptions and attitudes with regard to the subject matter in order to be upfront about them. Setting and testing hypotheses which do not grow from the setting itself and submitting their work to historical context. Simply the enlargement of the scope of historical enquiry already contributes to not forcing people and events out of their time and place in historical context.

(see Bernstein 1991, 336). That is, of course, unless the historian is satisfied with maintaining ontological monism.

- (3) Anthropological historiography, therefore also impacts on the way the issue of factuality or historicity of individual components is treated. Or, as Rösen (1993, 178–179) describes it: “Historical studies looks at cultures which do not belong to the tradition of western self-understanding and deliberately adopts its methods to accommodate these cultures, thereby even alienating itself from the western historical tradition in order to release the sparks of the alternative from its own history.” In fact, he says (1993, 210), the historicity of alien and strange events and phenomena “lies in their marring the common sense criteria of historical interpretation”. Determining the historicity, for example, of a special birth account cannot be done by means of the tools of Western self-understanding. In fact, from such a perspective it cannot even be determined what the documents actually are about.

To conclude with the above metaphor: despite sophisticated ways of dealing with a typewriter, it remains present-minded historiography if it is primarily described as an antique computer. Present-mindedness can be overcome by widening the scope of vision, which would allow us to see the reality and otherness of typewriters even when it means placing a moratorium on what we know about computers. Anthropological historiography is a paradigm aiming to get a grasp of the historical reality of especially alien distant text, phenomena and events. It is this approach of historiography that poses a serious challenge to current historical Jesus research but also offers a way out.

4. *The historiographical character of Jesus research*

Crossan (1991, xxviii) complains that the diversity in historical Jesus research is an “academic embarrassment” which forces us back to issues of theory and method. For him, this implies to move away from “textual looting” to a method firmly grounded in scientific stratigraphy of the documents. In my view, contrary to Crossan, despite the differences he mentions and many other differences among historical Jesus researchers, there is a remarkable singularity in historical Jesus research. In fact, on a very fundamental level, scholars

are still trying to answer the question as formulated more than 200 years ago and by means of the same interpretive process. It will be suggested that current historical Jesus research is still determined by the assumptions and attitudes of traditional (or positivistic) historiography which structured the research question. Consequently, it displays a glaring lack of the features associated with postmodern historiography, specifically, anthropological historiography.

Let us start with a brief overview of what is going on in historical Jesus research and then move to what the historiographical nature of current historical Jesus scholarship and the status of historical knowledge in Jesus research entail.

4.1. *The nature of the authenticity paradigm in current historical Jesus research*

Historical Jesus research consists of two separate but closely linked components: what historians are looking for, or, the historical figure, and what they are looking at, the documentary evidence. Both components can be considered well-developed fields of research with highly sophisticated results. What is believed about the one impacts on the other. Together they manifest as different configurations of nested assumptions about Jesus as historical figure and the documents as literary sources in what will be called the “authenticity paradigm”. Some of the features are evident in Du Toit’s (2001, 99) description of the Third Quest:

The Third Quest shares with the Second Quest most of its basic critical presuppositions: the quest for Jesus is conducted within the framework of modern historical criticism, assuming that the Jesus tradition should be subjected to historical analysis in order to reveal the Jesus of history covered by many layers of Christian tradition and dogma. As part of this process, it holds a number of theoretical and methodological presuppositions in common with its predecessors. Jesus research since 1980 shares with the Second Quest the two-source hypothesis as a broad framework of the search for Jesus, furthermore the assumption of the arbitrary, that is, non-biographical arrangement of the Gospel material in Mark (and consequently also in the other Synoptics) and John, it similarly presupposes the kerygmatic nature of the Gospel tradition and the consequent stratified nature of the tradition.

Both what historians are looking for and looking at are clearly fixed in this research paradigm. The received wisdom of this paradigm is that a historical figure could not have been like any of the portrayals in the documents and consequently, the latter consist of layered

traditions in which a later mythical, theological or literary overlay covered the original figure. Consequently, the interpretive process consists of moving backwards from identified authentic material to the historical figure underneath the overlay. Each of the three components can be considered briefly.

4.1.1. *The historical figure was different from any of the portrayals in the texts*

The basic assumption which characterises the more than 200 years of historical Jesus research claims that what the texts speak about, namely, the historical figure and the events and phenomena ascribed to him, could not have belonged to normal historical reality. Since its inception, this notion has structured the quest for the historical Jesus.

A strong version of the conviction that the historical figure is to be distinguished from the presentation in the documents is associated particularly with the Jesus Seminar. When the early Christians talked or wrote about “the words and deeds of Jesus, they were not thinking about a historical figure from their past, but rather about the supernatural Lord living in their present”, Miller (1999, 32) says. With this the very nature of the gospels, as seen in this approach, has also been established: they “are assumed to be narratives in which the memory of Jesus is embellished by mythic elements that express the church’s faith in him” (Funk, Hoover and The Jesus Seminar 1993, 4–5), and therefore, the gospel traditions are basically to be mistrusted as historical sources.¹⁷ The historical figure was thus a “normal” first-century Mediterranean person whose life story was turned into that of a mythical hero.

The weak version of this assumption is shared by most other historical Jesus researchers. It maintains that with the exception of the synoptic gospels, the other sources are to be mistrusted (see below). Even in the case of the synoptic gospels, “the varnish of faith in Jesus covers everything” (Sanders 1993, 73). Scholars who employ

¹⁷ Funk (1996, 65) strongly argues that the real and critical engagement in historical study of Jesus distinguishes the historical Jesus from the Jesus of the gospels and from the Christ of the creeds. “The quest of the historical Jesus is an effort to emancipate the Galilean sage from the tangle of Christian overlay that obscures, to some extent, who Jesus was and what he said, to distinguish the religion of Jesus from the religion about Jesus” (1996, 31).

the weaker version admit that at least some of the events and phenomena, such as the nature miracles, could not have happened and are therefore not historical or real. But, the majority of events and phenomena in the synoptic gospels, although they do not belong to the category of normal human events and phenomena, can be considered plausible and historical because they are classified as “supernatural”.¹⁸

4.1.2. The layered nature of the literary sources

Fuelled by the above conviction, historical Jesus research since its inception operated with the notion of a linear development of the Jesus material, which resulted in stratified documents that were created long after Jesus’ life. The description of Meier (1991, 167) is widely shared:

How can we distinguish what comes from Jesus (Stage I, roughly AD 28–30) from what was created by the oral tradition of the early Church (Stage II, roughly AD 30–70) and what was produced by the editorial work (redaction) of the evangelists (Stage III, roughly AD 70–100)?

Based on this picture, three common characteristics about the sources can be highlighted. First, all the literary texts consist of different strata since they have the same layered features as described above.¹⁹ Secondly, most of the documentary data were actually created in Stage III and are therefore historically useless.²⁰ Thirdly, some texts

¹⁸ Jesus’ birth and resurrection accounts contain such supernatural elements; some claim if a video camera were available, it would have been possible to photograph many of the events/phenomena ascribed to him because they were real. Therefore, it is also often claimed that such miracles where God has acted in history, go beyond the realm of history. To be sure, the historical events in Jesus’ life could contain natural plus supernatural components.

¹⁹ As Crossan (1998, 140) states: “All the gospel texts, whether inside or outside the canon, combine together three layers, strata, or voices. There is, as the earliest stratum, ‘the voice of Jesus’. There is as the intermediate stratum, ‘the anonymous voices of the communities talking about Jesus’. There is, as the latest stratum, ‘the voices of their [the gospels’] authors’.”

²⁰ Crossan (1994, 20), for example, claims: “. . . a large amount of the deeds of Jesus were created within Exegetical Christianity. They believed in the historical Jesus so much that they kept creating more and more of him out of biblical type and prophetic text.” Even the Gospel of John does not fare well because it is “mostly as a secondary source to supplement or corroborate the testimony of the Synoptic tradition” while the value of the extra canonical gospels becomes “progressively slighter” Dunn (2003, 167) says.

do contain historical nuggets.²¹ The opinion is split on which texts do contain valuable historical nuggets. There is a “broad scholarly consensus that we best find access to the historical Jesus through the synoptic tradition” (Theissen and Merz 1998, 25). This is the majority of scholars who also ascribe to the weak version above. A minority of scholars from the Jesus Seminar add two more features: the synoptic gospels in particular were compiled from different sources and therefore the earliest literary stratum has to be identified and, secondly, some of the extra-canonical texts contain authentic or older material. A large part of the authenticity paradigm remains committed to the notion that older is better; older brings you back to the historical figure.²²

4.1.3. The interpretive process: moving from literary texts to historical figure

Given the above interpretive assumptions, the basic question is “how to get back from literary texts which were created in the third phase of development and which contained material from all three phases of development, to the historical figure who is buried in and at the first phase and who is different from what is displayed at the third phase?”

There are two well-trodden roads how scholars get back from the documents to the historical figure. Those following the strong version about Jesus as historical figure obviously take most of the documentary evidence as literary creation and theological embellishment. Only small nuggets to be identified underneath these layers can be used to identify the historical figure free from all the mythical adornment. The identified historical figure therefore turns out to be a very *ordinary* first-century person, probably a teacher of some kind. Scholars from the weak version who accept the synoptic gospels as basically authentic first remove the small unauthentic nuggets and take the rest as reports of what had been remembered about Jesus. The historical

²¹ “Few if any today assume that the written sources take the reader back directly to Jesus who worked and taught in Galilee three or more decades earlier. But equally, few if any doubt that behind the written sources there was earlier tradition” (Dunn 2003, 173).

²² Some scholars are very explicit about this: “It is in the archaic collections imbedded in Q that one can with most assurance speak of material that goes back to sayings of Jesus himself” (Robinson 2001, 44).

figure in these constructions turns out to be a person with “normal” as well as a large amount of supernatural features that belong to his biography.

According to the first view, what happened in real life was that stories about a renowned teacher were elaborated and expanded in order to create this great mythical figure. The second picture claims that, because *natural* and *supernatural* events and phenomena can belong to the natural world, to the life of a historical figure, in real life this was indeed an instance of remembered reports about such a figure.

4.2. *A (critical) evaluation of the authenticity paradigm*

Scholars often pride themselves on the fact that the insights in historical Jesus research are more than 200 years old without ever realising that those insights were, by definition, first formulated in the time of positivistic, traditional historiography. In fact, the most astounding feature about most current historical Jesus research is that it is still trying to answer the same old question and follow the same interpretive route from authentic material back to the historical figure who must have been different from the reports that have been preserved about him. Since it is impossible to offer a thorough analysis of the historiographical nature of this paradigm, only a few lines can be drawn here. Two features of traditional historiography, the myth of realism and ontological monism, are very prominent in the authenticity paradigm.

In NT jargon, Malina (2002, 5) refers to the “myth of realism” as the belief in “immaculate perception” which maintains, “the evidence is there for the picking, just read the sources!” And it is based precisely on a reading of the sources from the point of view of ontological monism that most of the events and phenomena attributed to Jesus are taken to be unhistorical, impossible or not real and that a historical figure could not have been like the gospel portrayals. It is apparent in both configurations introduced above. There are very sophisticated debates about the historicity of individual events or phenomena because of the differences between the sources, but almost totally lacking is a consideration of those very events and phenomena as cultural events from an alien cultural system. In other words, the texts are read *straight*.

Scholars who follow the weak version about Jesus as historical figure read the documents straight by means of ontological monism,

and thus confirm that the kind of events and phenomena ascribed to Jesus could not have happened in normal circumstances. Therefore, the modern Western notion of the “supernatural” as part of “what could be real” (see Saler 1977), is added. It is part of the inability of the Western positivist tradition (ontological monism) of appreciating the absolute presuppositions and unspoken assumptions of people from outside this cultural sphere that one sees at work here.

Both are excellent examples of present-minded historiography, which goes to extreme lengths to bring the exotic, strange and alien reports in the documents under control of the modern world-view. Both kinds of pictures that emerge (a teacher whose life was elaborated by means of mythical jargon or a *supernatural* type of figure) share the same ethnocentric features about the historical figure. Despite great sophistication in trying to identify the authentic parts or deal with the exotic pictures about a historical figure, or to determine historicity by comparing the various witnesses, the very constitution of this research problem is fully determined by present-mindedness, first of 19th century and today by 21st century Western scholars. There is a dismal lack of appreciation for the cultural singularity of both the kind of figure presented in the sources and the nature of the data that emerged from that kind of social personage and life.

4.3. *Towards a paradigm change in historical Jesus research*

The reverse side of the authenticity paradigm is the lack of sensitivity for the plurality of cultural realities and consequently, no anthropological historiographical engagement with the ultimate presuppositions and cultural system from which the stories and accounts in the gospels originated. Totally absent is the possibility that all the documentary accounts are about a cultural figure, who, similar to social personages in other cultural systems, could have been a cultural reality to those who shared his life and remembered him as such. The challenge from an anthropological historiographical perspective would be to find ways of understanding the documentary record about Jesus of Nazareth as about a cultural figure ascribed by means of specific cultural events and phenomena and to grasp what we are looking for (the social personage) as a figure who has put into motion cultural processes leading to the creation of the sources.

Anthropological historiography rejects a single view of reality as applicable to all people, past and present, in favour of one of multiple

realities in which the reality of cultural phenomena is appreciated while all efforts are made to deal with these in a cross-cultural and historical way. The sensibility of postmodern historiography suggests that if examples of comparable figures can be found in the anthropological record, then the data need not be interpreted from a present-minded point of view. In fact, the anthropological record might offer useful parallels in order to understand the exotic and strange data in the NT documents.

This is not the place to convince anyone that most of the documents about Jesus of Nazareth contain reports and stories about alien, strange and exotic events, behaviour and phenomena. Over the last decade members of the “Context Group” have published extensively about the alien cultural world of Jesus and his followers (see e.g. Stegemann, Malina and Theissen 2002). It is only necessary to look at the reports about a special birth, control of spirits and exorcism, encounters with ancestors and angels, dream reports and visionary experiences to realise that whatever was reported, belonged to a different world-view and to a figure alien to Western categories.

The question, therefore, would be about what kind of social personage the stories and reports were created, remembered and retold, that we find in the documentary evidence. Can a social type be identified in the anthropological record that can serve as hypothesis and parallel in order to explore the possibility that Jesus of Nazareth could have been such a social personage in his day? Such an approach will alter both what we are looking at and looking for. Suffice it to draw two rough lines of insight that become apparent from such a perspective.

4.3.1. Jesus of Nazareth as a social personage in his day

From this perspective, it goes without saying that as a social personage Jesus of Nazareth existed as a cultural figure within a particular cultural system. If he was a cultural figure or social personage in his world, as a historical figure he was created and constituted by means of the cultural dynamics and processes within that world. In other words, as historical figure he was constituted by means of the cultural dynamics, expectations and conventions of his day and if his followers remembered anything about him, it must have been as a culturally constituted figure. These would include both the shared experiences and the sharing of experiences in their cultural world,

which would include group experiences of, say, the baptism scene and exorcisms. It would cover the processes of honouring, legitimating and affirmation of identity as well as processes of rumour and gossip about the social personage within that community. All of these processes, which contribute to the actual creation of a social personage in traditional societies, were then part of his life in Galilee.

Within such a view, variety of reports and remembered versions of events and phenomena is virtually guaranteed right from the very moment in Galilee. Such processes are communal and community processes which continue to make sense in their transmission processes.

As indicated above, questions of reality and historicity become immeasurably more complex when viewed through the lenses of anthropological historiography. Affirming the cultural reality of many of the stories and accounts ascribed to Jesus does not mean they actually happened as described nor that they were "out there". They were real in the sense of constituting a historical figure and determining peoples' actions or responses to him as social personage, but that does not mean they could have been photographed, so to speak. Dealing with the historicity and reality of most of the accounts in the gospels are as difficult (historiographically speaking) as grasping the historicity of a shamanic soul flight. Only the most ethnocentric anthropologist today would dismiss that as mere myth, delusion or literary creations.

Grasping the nature of Jesus as social personage would thus have to include an analysis of the nature of the events and phenomena ascribed to him as both cultural and social phenomena. In other words, as a cultural event, an exorcism or a special birth report can belong to his biography in Galilee but be embedded in the dynamic processes of creating the biography of a social personage such as he was. That implies dealing with both the nature of the events and phenomena and the way in which they functioned as cultural realities within that setting. And if the cultural events and phenomena were already part of Jesus' life in Galilee, it would obviously be necessary to rethink the origin and development of the literary sources.

4.3.2. The documentary record as cultural reports

The second line of argument is that if a cultural understanding of the events and phenomena ascribed to Jesus can be ascertained, it would impact not only on what historians are looking for, but also

on what they are looking at. It is, therefore, necessary not only to radically rethink what Jesus as historical figure could have been like, but also what the gospels as historical sources are. If Jesus was a social personage as suggested above, the documents can be seen as the remembered versions of both the cultural processes, events and phenomena that constituted him as a social personage. In other words, they can be seen as diverse reports about a social personage already in the Galilean setting.

If Jesus was a cultural figure (one constituted by means of the cultural processes which included such things as the ascription of a special birth or visitation by ancestors or the devil during his lifetime), what was remembered, retold and first written down about him, probably contained much about him as social personage. If so, it is necessary to rethink the received wisdom that the gospels originated as later literary creations and embellishments of a pristine historical figure. They can then be seen as the reports about what was remembered about the cultural figure in Galilee.

That later additions and even theological elaborations of all sorts were added in due time, is likely but that can only be established once a better picture of the cultural figure as he actually existed in Galilee in the first century has been obtained. From a postmodern historiographical perspective, that seems to be the main challenge today: about what kind of cultural personage such stories were remembered as are available in all the gospel (including extra-canonical) documents.

4.3.3. Summary remarks

Both components of historical Jesus research, namely, what we are looking for and what we are looking at, appear radically different from this perspective. They are obviously closely interconnected in this perspective in that the documents are taken as about a specific social personage and they originated in an organic process from the life of this figure. The challenge is to find a hypothesis that can account for the reports as well as the reported figure.²³ Therefore,

²³ My own hypothesis is that a careful analysis of the data will show that the portrayal in the sources is very typical of shamanic figures. However, it is not my aim to defend that hypothesis here. Suffice it to say that anthropological historiography opens the way to look at the data in a totally different way since it demonstrates that such social personages could be real and historical.

it is necessary to explore the presented social personage as well as the documentary evidence in the light of a plausible social type hypothesis.

What can be seen through such lenses is not only that the historical figure could have been like this but also that what constituted a historical figure within that setting were the cultural dynamics and processes within his world. And the literary documents contain a remarkable record of these cultural processes.

5. *Concluding remarks*

Historical Jesus research, such as most other branches of historical research, is eager to move away from traditional and positivistic historiography. However, it is the “assumptions and attitude of historians themselves which have to be carefully assessed before we can come to any conclusion about the real status of historical knowledge”, Tosh (1984, 117) remarks. Simply avoiding certain attitudes and assumptions is not sufficient in reaching that goal. As such, it is not the search for how things were or claims of what Jesus was like which make a study positivistic; that is what historians have been doing all along. It is how it is done which determines the historiographical character of a study.

Therefore, it is neither the claim that a particular (re)construction is incomplete (or not the final one) nor the confession that research results are tentative and open to further investigation²⁴ which will ensure that it is post-positivistic (or indeed postmodern). Both are reservations about the force of a construction and not a claim about its character or validity. The claim that a *positivistic* construction is incomplete, preliminary and tentative is not the same as avoiding positivism.

²⁴ Across a broad spectrum of Jesus studies it is today accepted that constructions are not fixed and final. Crossan's (1998, 41–45) disclaimer emphasises the delusion of positivism. Jesus reconstruction, he says, is always a creative interaction of the past and the present (and not possible without interference from your personal and social location). Funk (1996, 20) states that his picture of Jesus will be “tentative, subject to further investigation and new information”. It often takes lengthy analyses to show to what extent Jesus books are, in fact, positivistic, despite such disclaimers (see, e.g., the discussion of Marsh 1997, 411).

It is also not the case that because the NT texts only contain a selection and are already an interpretation of events and phenomena, and therefore not to be equated with the historical past or historical figure (see e.g. Funk 1996, 58; Schröter 2002, 167; Lategan 2004, 146), that a reconstruction of the past figure is impossible. For many historians the issue no longer is whether the historical record is a complete record of the past—they know it is not (see Tosh 1984, 111). Historiography, therefore, is not a recreation of the past but a reconstruction aiming to show how things were or what the state of affairs was. For then, as Schinkel (2004, 39) points out, our “perception of the past, although more indirect, is not fundamentally different from our perception of the present. In both cases a selection is made, which means that some elements in our perception will feature more prominently, and others will remain hidden in the background”. It is not necessary (in fact, it is impossible) to only act when everything is included in a perception or reconstruction.

The question is whether the preserved data is enough to detect the patterns and processes of the otherness encountered. And where otherness from such an alien and strange world is involved, current historiography offers the insights of anthropological historiography in order to ask appropriate questions. Unless Jesus researchers start asking cultural sensitive questions about Jesus as historical personage and the sources as cultural artefacts, the paradigm will remain positivistic. It was the adoption of cultural pluralism in the historiographical project that served as one of the major turning points away from positivistic historiography.

Although he is not involved in current historical Jesus research, Bernard Lategan also struggles with the question of history and reality. In fact, it has been part of his academic involvement for many years (see Lategan and Vorster 1985; Lategan 1994; Lategan 2002a). The contribution and challenge offered here in his honour is that there is a new paradigm to be explored for historical Jesus research. Based on his reflection on historiography, the direction of his answer to this issue is to steer away from the *pastness* of the past—the historical reality—by emphasising that all knowledge is hypothetical and therefore the historical reality cannot be captured. Instead, the focus should be on their sense-making and communication, he says (see also Lategan 2002b, 123–124). If he were to get involved in historical Jesus research on the basis of the explicit claim that there is no past prior to historiography and that the latter, therefore, merely is

construction (see 2002a, 198), it would from the point of view argued here probably display the features of present-minded historiography. While sense-making is an important component of historical work, the question remains, sense-making of what? Cultural alien documents can no longer be read *straight* in order to determine either their communicative thrust or theological meaning. Both of these are embedded in what Jesus of Nazareth was like as a social personage and modern engagement with that figure can no longer avoid jumping into the stream of anthropological historiography.

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PART THREE

INTERTEXTUALITY IN ANTIQUITY

INTERTEXTUAL READINGS IN THE SEPTUAGINT

Johann Cook

ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates that intertextuality is not a post-modern phenomenon, but already occurs in ancient texts, such as the Septuagint. These translators were guided by the principle of contextuality and the person(s) responsible for Proverbs firstly took the smaller context into account (Prov 10:18, 22). Secondly, larger contexts from LXX Proverbs were accounted for (Prov 2:8 and 30:5; 2:18 and 9:18; 9:10 and 13:15). Thirdly, larger contexts from the LXX had an interplaying impact (Prov 1:7 and Ps 110(111); Prov 3:16 and Isa 45:23). Finally, larger contexts from external sources were consulted by the translator (Prov 2:11, 17; and 28:4).

1. *Introduction*

Definitions of intertextuality vary. According to Beal (2000, 128) “intertextuality is a theory that conceives of every text as a set of relations between texts, an intersection of texts that are themselves intersections of text, and so on. Every text is a locus of intersections, overlaps, and collisions between other texts. Every text is an *inter-text*, that is, a between-text (*inter*, “between”), a paradoxical locus of dislocation, without center and without boundaries”. Or in the words of Barthes (1987, 39): “Any text is an intertext; other texts are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognisable forms: the texts of the previous and surrounding culture. Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of codes, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc. pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text.”

On the face of it, looking at the scholars quoted here, intertextuality is seemingly a modern, and perhaps one can even say a post-modern phenomenon even though both Beal and Barthes talk about *every text* and *all texts*. The truth of the matter, however, is that it is an ancient phenomenon. Texts are used as “between” things, as

“new tissues of past citations” already in ancient times. Examples of such textual phenomena occur in cuneiform tablets in Mesopotamia (Olivier 1975, 24). Intertextual readings also abound in the Hebrew Bible. Michael Fishbane (1985) has demonstrated this phenomenon in the Hebrew Bible, indicating how later texts are based upon and reinterpret earlier ones in an intertextual manner. He does talk, however, about *innerbiblical exegesis* in this regard (Fishbane 1985, 8). Before him Geiger (1857/1928) had already addressed these issues, demonstrating that the major textual versions (Sept, Tgg and SP) reflect reworkings of the Hebrew Bible in the light of post-biblical social and theological concerns, but also that the Hebrew Bible is itself the product (and source) of such reworkings.

This applies to the book of Proverbs and more specifically the Hebrew version too. Bauman (1996, 146), for example, found that the priestly creation passage was used intertextually by the author(s) of Proverbs. Rabbinic literature is also riddled with similar phenomena. Boyarin’s *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* and the article “Midrash” in *Handbook in Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* are applicable examples. Finally, the Septuagint can in more ways than one be deemed an explicitly intertextual writing. The Greek translators made use of earlier writings and exegetical traditions in their endeavour to make clear what any given text actually meant.

In this contribution, I will demonstrate that intertextuality, or rather intertextual reading in the Septuagint took place on more than one level. The individual translators were clearly guided by the concept of *contextuality*. As an example of this contextual approach in LXX Proverbs, I can refer to the deliberate avoidance of misunderstanding by the translator concerning the persons responsible for the Proverbs. In Proverbs 30 and 31 the names of Agur and Lemuel are removed from the Septuagint since they seem to contradict what Proverbs 1 verse 1 says, namely that Solomon, the son of David, the king of Israel is actually the author of these proverbs.

Proverbs 30:1

דְּבַרִּי אֲגִיר בִּן־יָקֹחַ הַמַּשָּׁא נֶאֱמַר הַנֶּבֶר לְאִיתִיאל לְאִיחָל וְאֻכָּל:

The words of Agur son of Jakeh of Massa. The man says to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal:

τοὺς ἑμούςς λόγους, υἱέ, φοβήθητι

καὶ δεξάμενος αὐτοὺς μετανόει·

τάδε λέγει ὁ ἄνθρωπος τοῖς πιστεύουσιν θεῷ, καὶ παύομαι·

My son, fear my words,
and repent when you receive them;
thus says the man to those who believe in God: now I stop.

In this specific intertextual, or perhaps one should say, contextual approach the translators of the LXX firstly took the smaller context within any given unit into account. Secondly, in some instances the larger context of this unit was accounted for. Thirdly, the translator(s) also referred to larger contexts—books within the corpus of Septuagint literature, and finally external exegetical literature was incorporated intertextually.

Before dealing with these issues, I first of all need to address specific methodological questions that have a bearing upon these modes of translation, specifically as they impact on the Greek version of Proverbs. Textual problems, including the fact that the Old Greek has not yet been determined systematically and the question of the translation technique followed by the translators, are prominent amongst these issues.

2. *Methodological issues*

It is generally accepted that the way a translator approaches his parent text (his translation technique) has to be determined in order to evaluate a unit as a whole. If a translator rendered his parent text freely, it follows logically that deviations in comparison to a standard text, the Massoretic text in this case, should be ascribed to the translator and not to a deviating Semitic *Vorlage*. In a more literal translation, as a more general guideline, one would naturally be apt to search for deviating parent texts as a possible solution for the origin of variants.

2.1. *The translation technique of LXX Proverbs*

The person(s) responsible for this translated unit had a rather diversified and unique approach towards the parent text. I have demonstrated that the approach of the person(s) responsible for this unit should be defined as one of *diversity* and *unity* (Cook 2001a, 197). This definition is based upon studies of the way the parent text was rendered on a micro, lexical level, as well as on a macro level. As far as the first goes, some individual lexical items are rendered consistently, many are varied. This attitude does not prevent the translator, however,

from interpreting in individual instances, even where a generally consistent way of translation is followed in respect of a specific Hebrew word. Also on the *macro-level*, this translation unit exhibits unique features. The order of some chapters towards the end of the book that differ from, *inter alia*, MT, should be ascribed to its translator(s) (Cook 2003b), as is the removal of the names of Agur and Lemuel, who are mentioned as authors of some Proverbs in the Hebrew to which I have referred above.

It has become clear to me that this translator was a creative stylist with an exceptional knowledge of Jewish and Greek culture. This is observed on various niveaux. As far as his creative approach is concerned, he made ample use of *hapax legomena*, which he borrowed from the Greek world. There are also a number of *neologisms*. Furthermore, he applied a rather large number of *lexemes* exclusively in Proverbs (Cook 2002). As could be expected, he interprets extensively in some instances.

This interpretative character of the book, in my view, therefore complicates the interpretation of various aspects of the texts involved. For one, it makes the retroversion of the Semitic parent text practically impossible. There is a compounding factor, namely that the Old Greek of this unit has not yet been determined. I have addressed this issue in regards to a number of chapters (Cook 1997b), but the rest still need to be investigated.

In short, in the light of these comments, I would expect this translator to interpret his parent text on various levels. As a matter of fact, I have demonstrated that the principle of contextuality is honoured by this translator on more than one niveau.

3. Contextuality as guiding principle

3.1. Smaller context in a unit

There are numerous examples of intertextual/intratextual readings taking place on the lexical level within the smaller as well as the larger context. In Prov 10:18 and 22 the translator clearly related passages.

Proverbs 10:18

מִכְסֵּה שִׁנְאָה שֶׁפִּתִּי-שֶׁקֶר וּמִוֹצֵא דָבָר הוּא כִסִּיל:

Lying lips conceal hatred, and whoever utters slander is a fool.

καλύπτουσιν ἔχθραν χεῖλη δίκαια,
οἱ δὲ ἐκφέροντες λοιδορίας ἀφρονέστατοί εἰσιν.
Righteous lips conceal hatred;
but whoever utter slander are most foolish.

Proverbs 10:22

בְּרֵכָה יְהוָה הִיא תַעֲשֶׂיךָ וְלֹא יִסְרֶיךָ עֹצֵב עֲמָךְ
The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.
εὐλογία κυρίου ἐπὶ κεφαλὴν δικαίου·
αὕτη πλουτίζει, καὶ οὐ μὴ προστεθῇ αὐτῇ λύπη ἐν καρδίᾳ.
The blessing of the Lord *is upon the head of the righteous*; it enriches,
and grief of heart is not added to it.

In Prov 10:18 the translator is clearly interpreting because “lying lips” are defined as *righteous* lips. This is partly in agreement with v. 22, which contains an addition explicating the blessing of the Lord as one placed *upon the head of the righteous*. It is also possible that the process worked the other way around. Be that as it may, I think that the smaller context was taken into account by the translator. This is underscored by the fact that this phrase is part of a smaller context (vv. 20–25) in which the righteous and the wicked are contrasted. It is therefore possible that the translator actually took his cue from this smaller context. This is in line with a definite tendency of this translator to interpret. I have demonstrated that this translator indeed made use of contrasts more explicitly than is found in the Hebrew (MT) (Cook 1997a). This therefore in my opinion represents an intertextual/contextual reading of the whole context, but it is motivated by a religious theme, the issue of contrasting.

Since I have been using the terminology intertextual and contextual, unrefined and interchangeably I need to differentiate between these terms. The former to me seems to be aimed at the issue of quotations from all sorts of sources, this would include I would argue, internally within a given source or book, although one could argue that these are actually intratextual readings (I will return to this issue). In the latter, the question of context is determinative. In the instance that I discussed thus far, it is clear that there is a relationship between these two concepts. The translator refers back to/quotes from a specific verse within a certain context.

3.2. *Larger context in a unit*

There are many examples of the translator taking the larger context into account. The first example is evident on a smaller, lexical level.

Proverbs 2:8 and 30:5

2:8

לְנִצָּר אֶת־דַּרְכֵי צְדָקָה וְיִשְׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה

guarding the paths of justice,
and preserving the way of his faithful ones.

τοῦ φυλάξαι ὁδοὺς δικαιοματίων

καὶ ὁδὸν εὐλαβουμένων αὐτὸν διαφυλάξει.

to guard the paths of justice,
and he will preserve the way of the ones who revere him.

30:5

כָּל־אִמְרַת אֱלֹהִים צְדָקָה מִן הוּא לְחַסִּים בּוֹ

Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge
in him.

πάντες λόγοι θεοῦ πεπυρωμένοι,

ὑπερασπίζει δὲ αὐτὸς τῶν εὐλαβουμένων αὐτόν·

All the words of God are tried;
and he shields those who revere him.

The Greek verb εὐλαβέομαι appears twice in the book of Proverbs (2:8 and 30:5). In addition, it is found in the LXX 28 times in total. In Prov 2:8 it is apparently used to render יִשְׁמְרוּ. In Proverbs 30 it is used as an equivalent for חָסָה. It is therefore a question whether the underlying Hebrew text was יִשְׁמְרוּ or perhaps חָסָה (the Peshitta actually reads חָסָה). The problem with the Hebrew as well as the Greek readings is that they both appear rarely in Proverbs. According to Lisowsky (1958), this is the sole example of יִשְׁמְרוּ in Proverbs. חָסָה appears only in Prov 14:32 and 30:5.

In my opinion, the translator, in line with his general approach, related the two passages (2:8 and 30:5) and he interpreted the Hebrew in Prov 2:8 as coming from חָסָה. A problem in this explanation is that the translator had not yet translated Proverbs 30 at this time. However, one has to consider the possibility that he would have returned to earlier passages once he had completed the collection as a whole. Another possibility is that the latter passage was actually interpreted in the light of the former. Be that as it may, the translator made use of intertextual readings in this instance. Perhaps it would be more correct to talk of *intra*-textual reading in this regard.

Again, I need to refine the argument. As stated earlier intertextual refers to the relationship between separate texts (influence, parody, allusion, etc.) whereas *intratextual* rather refers to the relationship within a single text, it thus has to do with internal relationships.

Proverbs 2:18 and 9:18

2:18

כִּי שָׁקָה אֶל־מָוֶת בֵּיתָהּ וְאֶל־רָפָאִים מַעְגְּלֶיהָ׃

for her house sinks down to death,
and her paths to the shades;

ἔθετο γὰρ παρὰ τῷ θανάτῳ τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς
καὶ παρὰ τῷ ἔδῃ μετὰ τῶν γηγενῶν τοὺς ἄξονας αὐτῆς·
for it has fixed her house near death
and its pathways near Hades with the giants.

9:18

וְלֹא־יָדַע בִּי־רָפָאִים שֶׁם בְּעַמְקֵי שְׁאוֹל קָרְאֶיהָ׃

But he does not know that the shades are there,
that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

ὁ δὲ οὐκ οἶδεν ὅτι γηγενεῖς παρ' αὐτῇ ὄλλυνται,
καὶ ἐπὶ πέτευρον ἔδου συναντᾷ.

But he does not know that primeval men perish by her,
and he meets up with a springboard of Hades.

Proverbs 2:18 in the Greek contains nuances that have no equivalent in the Hebrew. This applies to the reference to Hades, which seems to be an explicative addition. The Greek has two phrases describing the Hebrew phrase אֶל־רָפָאִים, namely παρὰ τῷ ἔδῃ and μετὰ τῶν γηγενῶν. It is a question which of the two should be taken as the original. The Greek lexeme γηγενής appears only five times in the LXX and two of these in Proverbs, namely 2:18 and 9:18, where אֶל־רָפָאִים is the underlying Hebrew. One could therefore argue that in 2:18 γηγενής is used as equivalent for אֶל־רָפָאִים and that the translator (or a later redactor) indeed took Proverbs 9 into account in his rendering by adding παρὰ τῷ ἔδῃ explicatively.

Whereas these two examples testify to intertextual or rather intratextual readings on the level of the lexical, the next one includes a reading on a broader level, concerning a whole strophe.

Proverbs 9:10 and 13:15

9:10

תְּחִלָּתָהּ חֲכָמָה יֵרָאֵת יְהוָה וְדַעַת קְדָשִׁים בִּינָה׃

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

ἀρχὴ σοφίας φόβος κυρίου
καὶ βουλή ἁγίων σύνεσις·

τὸ γὰρ γνῶναι νόμον διανοίας ἐστὶν ἀγαθῆς·
The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord
and the counsel of saints is understanding,
for to know the law is the sign of a sound mind.

13:15

שְׂכֵל-טוֹב יִתֵּן חֵן וְדָרֶךְ בְּגֵדִים אִשָּׁן:

Good sense wins favour, but the way of the faithless is their ruin.

σύνεσις ἀγαθὴ δίδωσιν χάριν,
τὸ δὲ γνῶναι νόμον διανοίας ἐστὶν ἀγαθῆς,
ὁδοὶ δὲ καταφρονούντων ἐν ἀπωλείᾳ.

Sound discretion wins favour,
and to know the law is the sign of a sound mind;
but the ways of scorners end in destruction.

The first two stichs in chapter 9 correspond literally with MT, excepting of course the word order. The third stich has no equivalent in MT, or in any of the other textual witnesses, for that matter. Scholars have a difference of opinion on this matter. De Lagarde (1863, 30) argues that this plus should be taken as the more original. Seeligmann (1953, 179), on the contrary, takes the third stich as a later, secondary addition from an original in Prov 13:15. This stich is thus also added in the later passage where it is, according to Seeligmann, used as an application of the phrase שְׂכֵל-טוֹב יִתֵּן חֵן (good sense wins favour). He also has an interesting interpretation of νόμον in the stich in Proverbs 13, which he takes as a reference to תּוֹרָה (the law). He ingeniously bases his conclusion on a rabbinical statement: “wenn die Schrift von חֵן redet, so meint sie immer Thorah.” It is certainly possible that this is an indirect reference to the law in these passages and that the law could have figurative nuances at this stage, as argued by Seeligmann.

I would nevertheless agree with De Lagarde that this stich belongs to the original translator, but for different reasons. I do not think that this stich was drawn in secondarily from Prov 13:15 as suggested by Seeligmann. I would argue, on the contrary, that the process worked the other way around. The translator actually consulted, intertextually or perhaps it would be better to say intratextually/contextually, a passage he had rendered earlier. I have also argued that there are actually ideological reasons for this repeated

application of the phrase. I am of the opinion that in this case the translator repeated the phrase that includes a reference to the law of Moses, since the law was being devalued in an increasingly Hellenising historical context (Cook 1999).

3.3. *Larger context from the LXX*

This is a difficult and also a contentious issue about which scholars have differences of opinion. I will discuss two examples, the first a fairly clear-cut one; the second a rather more dubious one.

Proverbs 1:7 and Psalm 110 (111)

יְרֵאָה יְהוָה הִשְׁתָּיִת דָּעַת תְּכִמָּה וּמוֹדָר אֱוִילִים בָּוֹן:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

ἀρχὴ σοφίας φόβος θεοῦ,

σύνεσις δὲ ἀγαθὴ πᾶσι τοῖς ποιοῦσιν αὐτήν·

εὐσέβεια δὲ εἰς θεὸν ἀρχὴ αἰσθήσεως,

σοφίαν δὲ καὶ παιδείαν ἀσεβεῖς ἐξουθενήσουσιν.

The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God,

and understanding is good for all those who practice it;

and piety unto God is the beginning of perspective,

the impious, however, will despise wisdom and instruction.

As can be observed, the Greek has two more stichs than the Hebrew. It remains a daunting task to determine which of these actually represent the OG. The Greek differs in more respects than only the addition of the two mentioned strophes. Firstly, the Hebrew word order of verse 7a is inverted in the first stich in the LXX. Moreover, the second stich in the Greek has no equivalent in any of the major textual witnesses, including MT. Other conspicuous characteristics are that the final stich in the Greek seems to be a relatively literal rendering of the third stich, whereas the third stich in the LXX corresponds largely to the first stich in MT. In this regard, it could be helpful to remember the rules of thumb suggested by De Lagarde (1863, 3) in his endeavours to determine when a passage in the LXX is indeed to be deemed as hexaplaric:

Wenn ein vers oder verstheil in einer freien und in einer sklavisch treuen übertragung vorliegt, gilt die erstere als die echte.

Wenn sich zwei lesarten nebeneinander finden, von denen die eine eine masoretischen text ausdrückt, die andre nur aus einer von ihm abweichenden urschrift erklärt werden kann, so ist die letzere für ursprünglich zu halten.

There are moreover conspicuous correspondences between this passage and Ps 110:10 (LXX) (111), which reads as follows:

ἀρχὴ σοφίας φόβος κυρίου,
 σύνεσις ἀγαθὴ πᾶσι τοῖς ποιοῦσιν αὐτήν.
 ἡ αἴνεσις αὐτοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος.
 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
 All those who practise it have a good understanding.
 His praise endures forever.

The Massoretic text of this verse reads:

רֵאשִׁית חָכְמָה יְרֵאָתָא יְהוָה
 שְׂכָל טוֹב לְכָל־עֹשִׂיהֶם
 תְּהַלְתּוּ עֲמֻדָת לְעֵד:
 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
 A good understanding have all those who practise it.
 His praise endures for ever!

As can be seen, the first two stichs in LXX Prov 1:7 agree largely with the Greek passage in the Psalms. Two differences are the use of the name κύριος instead of θεός and the addition of the particle δέ. The issue of the God names is a notoriously difficult one in Septuagintal studies (Pietersma 1984) and the translator of Proverbs uses Greek particles creatively, especially in this first chapter. These differences could therefore be the result of the creative approach of this translator.

I have argued that all four these strophes should be attributed to the translator, who had knowledge of the book of the Psalms and that this passage is indeed evidence that the Psalms were used inter-textually in order to explicate the essence of the wisdom that is depicted in the introduction to the whole of the book (1:1–7) (Cook 2001b, 228). According to this introduction, the most basic aspect of this wisdom is a religious concept, the fear of God and not any speculative or esoteric knowledge.

Isaiah 45:23 and Proverbs 3:16

Isa 45:23

בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי יֵצֵא מִפִּי צְדָקָה דְּבַר וְלֹא יָשׁוּב
 כִּי־לִי חֲכָמָה כָּל־פִּרְיָהּ הַשֹּׁבַע כָּל־לָשׁוֹן:

By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return: "To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear".

κατ' ἑμαυτοῦ ὁμνύω ἢ μὴν ἐξελεύσεται ἐκ τοῦ στόματός μου δικαιοσύνη, οἱ λόγοι μου οὐκ ἀποστραφήσονται ὅτι ἐμοὶ κάμψει πᾶν γόνυ καὶ ἐξομολογήσεται πᾶσα γλῶσσα τῷ θεῷ.

By myself I swear, righteousness shall surely proceed out of my mouth; my words shall not be frustrated, that to me every knee shall bend and every tongue shall swear by God.

Prov 3:16

:דְּיָמֶיךָ בְּיָמֶיךָ בְּיָמֶיךָ בְּיָמֶיךָ בְּיָמֶיךָ

For longevity and years of life are in her right hand; and in her left hand are riches and repute.

μῆκος γὰρ βίου καὶ ἔτη ζωῆς ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτῆς,

ἐν δὲ τῇ ἀριστερᾷ αὐτῆς πλοῦτος καὶ δόξα.

For longevity and years of life are in her right hand; and in her left hand are riches and repute.

Prov 3:16a

ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτῆς ἐκπορεύεται δικαιοσύνη, νόμον δὲ καὶ ἔλεον ἐπὶ γλώσσης φορεῖ.

Out of her mouth righteousness comes forth, and she carries law and mercy upon the tongue.

Fox (2000, 380) is of the opinion that this addition has its roots in Isa 45:23. At first sight, this seems to be an acceptable explanation. However, closer inspection indicates that the smaller reference to “righteousness coming from her mouth” is not enough evidence of direct influence. A more acceptable solution can be found in an intertextual or rather intratextual interpretation within the boundaries of the unit Proverbs.

There is a relationship of sorts between Prov 3:16, on the one hand, and Prov 31:25 and 28, on the other hand, bearing witness to intratextual activity in the Greek. Proverbs 31:26 (MT) reads:

:פִּיָּהּ הִתְחַנְּנָה בְּחָכְמָהּ וּבְתוֹרַת־יְהוָה עֲלֶיהָ שָׁנָה

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

The Greek of verse 25 reads:

στόμα αὐτῆς διήνοιξεν προσεχόντως καὶ ἐννόμως καὶ τάξιν ἐστείλατο τῇ γλώσσει αὐτῆς.

She opened her mouth *cautiously and legally*, and kept her tongue at bay.

The Greek of verse 28 has additional interpretations:

τὸ στόμα δὲ ἀνοίγει σοφῶς καὶ νομοθέσμως,

ἡ δὲ ἐλεημοσύνη αὐτῆς ἀνέστησεν τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐπλούτησαν,
καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς ἤνεσεν αὐτήν.

And she opens her mouth wisely and lawfully;

*and her compassion built up her children and they became rich;
her husband also praised her.*

To me it is clear that the translator is here interpreting, or religionising. He interprets wisdom as a religious category, righteousness and then he uses two further terms, law and mercy. The interpretation of two categories occurs elsewhere in Proverbs. For instance in 6:23, where the opposite process took place, and the two Hebrew words *הַחֹמֶה הַחַיִּים* are interpreted as a genitive construction (ἐντολὴ νόμου). This is in line with what this translator usually does as indicated above in 31:25, where wisdom is interpreted as *προσεχόντως καὶ ἐννόμως* (“cautiously and legally”). The point to make is that this translator is interpreting in these instances. I would therefore argue that the translator is responsible for these interpretations and that it is not the result of a different parent text, nor of a reinterpretation of Isa 45:23.

Finally, I discuss two examples of intertextual readings from external sources.

3.4. *Larger context from external sources*

Proverbs 2:11 and 17, and 28:4

2:11

מִזְמָה תִּשְׁמָר וְיָדְעָה תִּבְּרָךְ עַלְּךָ תִּנְצָרְךָ:

Prudence will watch over you;
understanding will guard you.

βουλὴ καλὴ φυλάξει σε,

ἔννοια δὲ ὁσία τηρήσει σε.

*Good counsel will guard you,
and holy intent will protect you.*

2:17

הַעֲזֹבָה אֶת־בִּרְיָתָהּ וְאֶת־בְּרִיתָהּ אֲלֵהָ:

who forsakes the partner of her youth
and forgets her sacred covenant

υἱέ, μή σε καταλάβῃ κακὴ βουλὴ
ἡ ἀπολείπουσα διδασκαλίαν νεότητος
καὶ διαθήκην θείαν ἐπιλελησμένη·

My son, do not let bad counsel overtake you,

that which forsakes the teaching of youth
and has forgotten the divine covenant.

In a previous article I demonstrated that the translator of Proverbs dealt systematically with the strange woman, commencing in 2:16–20 and ending in chapter 9 (Cook 1994). One example of this interpretation is the addition of *νιέ, μή σε καταλάβῃ κακή βουλή* (“My son do not let bad counsel overtake you”) in 2:17, which has no equivalent in the Hebrew and represents an interpretation not based on a different parent text. Hengel (1974, 281) understood this “bad counsel” as a reference to a contemporary “evil counsel”, namely Hellenistic wisdom. I concur (Cook 1994) with this point of view and to me a decisive argument is indeed the fact that the Greek concept *κακή βουλή* actually represents the rabbinic concept of the *היצר הרע*. I have argued that in verse 11 the counterpart of this bad counsel, good counsel (*היצר הטוב*), at least the adjective *κακή*, has been deliberately added by the translator (Cook 1987). This interpretation is thus an example of an intertextual application of external exegetical traditions with an ideological intention, namely to deliberately warn the readers against the dangers inherent in Hellenistic wisdom.

28:4

עֲזָבֵי תוֹרָה יִהְיוּ רָשָׁע וְשֹׁמְרֵי תוֹרָה יִתְגַּדְּרוּ בָם:

Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law struggle against them.

οὕτως οἱ ἐγκαταλείποντες τὸν νόμον ἐγκωμιάζουσιν ἀσέβειαν,

οἱ δὲ ἀγαπῶντες τὸν νόμον περιβάλλουσιν ἑαυτοῖς τεῖχος,

Likewise those who forsake the law and praise injustice.

But, those who love the law *build a wall around them*.

There seems to be no logical relationship between the LXX and the Hebrew (Cook 1999, 489). It is, nevertheless, possible that the Hebrew reading *נור* was deliberately understood as *גדר* (wall) or the waw could have been mistakenly read as a dalet. I think that in this case we actually have evidence of Jewish exegesis in the LXX. The concept of the law as a surrounding wall occurs widely in Judaism. However, here the law has a protective function for the righteous (building a wall around them). This is markedly different from the view found in some later rabbinical writings, for example, the Mishna, and in even later rabbinical writings such as *Aboth* 1.1, according to which the Torah must be protected! (Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, and the

elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the men of the great synagogue. The latter used to say three things: be patient in justice, rear many disciples and *make a fence around the Torah*).

I have located similar traditions in a number of Judaic sources, notably the *Letter of Aristeas* and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Aristeas letter, a Greek writing that can be roughly dated to the time of the LXX of Proverbs, reads as follows: “When therefore our lawgiver, equipped by God for insight into all things, has surveyed each particle, *he fenced us about with impregnable palisades and with walls of iron* [περιέφραξεν ἡμῶς ἀδιακόποις χάραξι καὶ σιδηροῖς τείχεσιν] to the end that we should mingle in no way with any other nation . . .” (trans. Hadas 1973, 157). As can be observed, this tradition agrees with that found in LXX Proverbs, but it is markedly different from the rabbinical views referred to above, according to which the Torah has to be encircled and not the righteous. I have discussed elsewhere the issue of the possible origin of these traditions, which also appear in the Dead Sea scrolls in another context (Cook 2003a, 337). However, the point to make here is that the translator of LXX Proverbs indeed made use of external exegetical traditions in an intertextual manner in his endeavour to make the Hebrew text clear to his Jewish audience.

4. Conclusion

I endeavoured to demonstrate that the translator of Proverbs—and he was a creative translator—made use of *intertextual* as well as *intra-textual* readings on more than one level. The principle of *contextuality* was clearly important to him, hence he took the smaller and the larger contexts into account. These contexts in some instances even included passages outside of the individual book, such as the Psalms, as well as well-known Jewish exegetical traditions. From a methodological perspective, I would nevertheless argue that the smaller and larger context within a given book—in this instance LXX Proverbs—would in general have priority, as I argued in connection with Prov 3:16 and Isa 45:23. Finally, the application of intertextual/intratextual readings was clearly deemed functional by the translator, for it is clear what the intent of this translator was, namely “to make the intention of his parent text, as he understood it, evident to his readers” (Cook 1997b, 316). This is markedly different from the way quotations from the Septuagint are applied in the NT (Steyn 1995).

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TORAH QUOTATIONS COMMON TO PHILO, HEBREWS, CLEMENS ROMANUS AND JUSTIN MARTYR: WHAT IS THE COMMON DENOMINATOR?

Gert J. Steyn

ABSTRACT

Certain Torah quotations are common to Philo, to the unknown author of Hebrews and to some of the early Church Fathers. These quotations represent a similar reading in the different groups of literature, which in some instances jointly differ from the reading in the LXX. One is thus confronted with the question: What is the common denominator? The possibilities explored in this paper include (a) the common Hellenistic milieu, (b) literary interdependence upon each other, (c) independent use of a “testimony book”, (d) sharing the same oral tradition, (e) independent use of a common *Vorlage* in the literary tradition, (f) the role of a Christian editorial hand, and (g) geographical proximity of the authors. It is argued that the answer to this question is probably to be found not in any single possibility, but rather in a combination of some of these. It is suggested—regarding the Torah quotations—that the author of Hebrews wrote from Alexandria to Christians in Rome and, being familiar with the works of Philo, made use of Philo’s Torah tradition. Clement of Rome (ca. 95) and Justin Martyr (ca. 165) all wrote later from Rome and, being familiar with the work of Hebrews, made use of his tradition in turn.

1. *Introduction*

In reading the late first century book of *Ad Hebraeos* (ca. ad 80–95), it soon becomes clear that almost all the quotations from the Torah are to be found in Philo’s writings (except for Gen 47:31 and Deut 9:19)—with most of these in his *Legum Allegoriae*. The relation between Philo and Hebrews has long since been identified (e.g. Carpzov 1750 and Loesnerus 1777).¹ More difficult to establish though, is the specific nature of this relation between Philo and Hebrews.

¹ So also H.-F. Weiss (1991, 178): “Daß hier in der Tat Zusammenhänge bestehen,

When turning to the Apostolic Father Clemens Romanus (1 Clement) and to the Apologist Justin Martyr, it is striking that some of these very same quotations re-appear—either with the same reading and presented as an explicit quotation, or in the form of an allusion. Even more striking, though, is that some of these quotations which represent the exact same reading amongst each other, differ with the known readings of the LXX and the MT. What are the reasons for these similarities and why do they exist?

Scholars dealt differently with this phenomenon in the past. Weaknesses in dealing with this issue in the past run mainly along three lines:

- (i) Most studies concentrated either on the relation between Philo and Hebrews, on the one hand, or on the relation between Hebrews and the early Church Fathers, on the other hand. Intertextual connectivity between Philo, Hebrews and the Church Fathers as three consecutive phases very seldom receive attention.
- (ii) Emphasis on the mutual differences in the application and interpretation of Scripture between Philo and the unknown author of Hebrews is usually applied as an argument against literary interdependence. However, literary interdependence does not assume necessarily that an author should “carbon copy” both the quotation as well as the application from his pretext (cf. the important contribution of Ellingworth [1979, 262–269] in this regard). There is enough evidence amongst the NT writers (particularly Hebrews) of how the same quotation that occurred in literature before their time, has been reinterpreted, or used differently, by themselves. Hebrews, in fact, is a case in point of how one NT writer used the same quotation differently in different contexts within the very same document!
- (iii) Different solutions were presented for this intertextual phenomenon. These include the existence of a possible “Testimony Book” (Thurston 1986, 133–143), the fact that Hebrews knew and used Philo’s writings (Spicq 1949, 542–573; 1952) and the role of a shared oral tradition from which both used certain subject matter (Thurston 1986, 133–143) and philosophies, such as Gnosis (Pearson 1990, 165–182). Most of the time these options are

ist schon angesichts dessen nicht zu bestreiten, daß gewisse Übereinstimmungen zwischen Hebr und Philon bei der Benutzung der Schrift festzustellen sind.”

difficult to prove. Other alternatives, such as a shared written tradition in the form of the existence of another version of the LXX and the geographical proximity of the authors ought to be considered as well.

With these three aspects in mind, it is the intention of this contribution to look at those quotations from the Torah that are common to Philo and Hebrews particularly, and then to trace some of their possible recurrences in Clemens Romanus and Justin Martyr. After identifying the occurrences and assessing the data, different solutions will be considered in order to determine what the common denominator(s) between these texts might have been.

The focus of commonality will be limited to the Torah only, due to a number of reasons. Firstly, the Torah was the most important part of Scripture for the Jews. Christians reinterpreted the Jewish Scriptures in the light of their understanding that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah to come. Secondly, it is fairly certain that the Torah was the first main part of Scripture to be translated into Greek in Alexandria—and possibly from a different Hebrew version than that known to us today in the form of the MT. Thirdly, scholars agree that the Torah plays the most prominent role in terms of Scripture in Philo's writings. Some notes regarding their results in this regard would suffice:

- “In seiner gesamten Schriftstellerei zitiert Philon sehr häufig den Pentateuch, während die übrigen Bücher der Hebräischen Bibel nur gelegentlich herangezogen werden”. “Man kann zwar nicht sagen, daß Philon Propheten und Hagiographen nicht kennt, aber er wertet sie der Tora gegenüber offenbar als zweitrangig” (Amir 1983, 68).
- “The great mass of Philo's quotations, . . . were drawn from the Pentateuch. To the Pentateuch Philo ascribes the highest degree of Divine authority” (Ryle 1895, xvii).
- “It would be impossible to mention all the many OT quotations and allusions which occur within the works of Philo, but the vast preponderance of them is Pentateuchal” (Williamson 1979, 499).
- “Philo seldom cites Scripture outside the Pentateuch” (Sowers 1965, 136).
- “Von insgesamt 1 161 biblischen Zitaten Philos in seinen griechisch überlieferten Schriften sind nur 41 nichtpentateuchischen Ursprungs” (Burkhardt 1988, 134).

2. *The data—a synopsis*

It is clear from the following synopsis that there are twelve quotations from the Torah that could be identified in the book of Hebrews. Four of these twelve Torah quotations that appear in Hebrews are to be found in both Philo as well as in some of the early Church Fathers (Gen 21:12; 22:16–17; 28:15 [Deut 31:6]; Num 12:7). Only these four will be discussed in more detail in this paper. It will be argued below that two of these are from Genesis and that the third is actually from Deut 31:6. With the exception of that quotation from Gen 28:15 (Deut 31:6), all of these are to be found in Philo's *Legum Allegoriae*. All four appear again in Justin's *Dialogue* and two of them in 1 Clement. The latter, a quotation from Gen 22:17, is to be found at a number of places in Philo, in Hebrews, 1 Clement and Justin.

As mentioned, only these four occurrences that are to be found in all three sections of literature (Philo, Hebrews and the Church Fathers), will be discussed. The remaining references listed in the synopsis below will not receive attention. Some of these have already been dealt with elsewhere, such as Gen 2:2 (Steyn 2002a, 43–50); Gen 14:17–20 (Steyn 2002b, 207–223); Deut 9:19 (Steyn 2007, forthcoming) and Deut 32:35–36 (Steyn 2000, 263–272).

Torah Quote	Philo	Hebrews	Early Christianity
Gen 2:2	<i>Post.</i> 64 <i>Leg.</i> 1.16	4:4	(2:7 = 1 Cor 15; 2:24 = Gospels) <i>Barn.</i> 15:3 = ἐβδόμη
Gen 14:17–20	<i>Leg.</i> 3.79; <i>Congr.</i> (99 cf. Josephus, <i>Ant.</i> 1.10.2)	7:1–2, 4	
Gen 14:20	<i>Congr.</i> 99	7:4	
Gen 21:12	<i>Leg.</i> 3.87 (<i>T. Ab.</i> 8.5ff.)	11:18	Rom 9:7 (Gen 21:10 = Gal 4:30) Justin, <i>Dial.</i> 56
Gen 22:16–17	<i>Leg.</i> 3.72, 203 (cf. also <i>Abr.</i> 273; <i>Somn.</i> 1.12; <i>QG</i> 1.180; <i>Sacr.</i> 90–93)	6:13–14	(Gen 22:18 = Acts 3:25) 1 Clem 32:2; Justin, <i>Dial.</i> 120

(cont.)

Torah Quote	Philo	Hebrews	Early Christianity
Gen 28:15 /Deut 31:6	<i>Conf.</i> 166; <i>Somn.</i> 1.1	13:5 (agrees with <i>Conf.</i>)	Justin, <i>Dial.</i> 58
Gen 47:31	(Not in Philo)	11:21	
Exod 24:8	<i>QE</i> 2.34–36	9:20	
Exod 25:40	<i>Leg.</i> 3.102; <i>QE</i> 2.73–82	8:5	
Num 12:7	<i>Leg.</i> 3.33, 72, 81	3:5	1 Clem 17:5; 43:1; Justin, <i>Dial.</i> 6.1
Deut 9:19	(Questionable)	12:21	
Deut 32:35–36	<i>Leg.</i> 3.34	10:30	

3. Evaluation and assessment of the data

3.1. *Genesis 21:12 in Philo, Leg. 3.87; Rom 9:7; Heb 11:18; Justin, Dial. 56*

Genesis 21 was read during the occasion of the Jewish New Year (Kistemaker 1961, 50). No wonder that it was so well known and many times quoted by Philo:² Gen 21:2 (*Fug.* 30); 21:6 (*Leg.* 2.21; 3.77; *Det.* 33; *Mut.* 24); 21:7 (*Migr.* 25); 21:8 (*Somn.* 2.10); 21:10 (*Cher.* 3—the same verse that is also quoted by Paul in Gal 4:30); 21:14–16 (*Sobr.* 2); 21:19 (*Post.* 38); 21:25, 26 (*Somn.* 1.14); 21:33 (*Plant.* 18, 20; *Mut.* 35). A part of the verse under discussion here, Gen 21:12a, is also quoted by Philo (*Leg.* 3.87—cf. *Cher.*): Πάντα ἂν ὅσα εἴποι Σάρρα ἄκουε τῆς φωνῆς αὐτῆς.

Genesis 21:12 is also quoted in the NT, but only the part of the quotation following directly after that quoted by Philo. Gen 21:12b is first to be found in Rom 9:7 (ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα), again in Heb 11:18 (ὅτι ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα) and in Justin, *Dial.* 56. If ὅτι is to be taken as part of the quotation in Heb 11:18³ then this is the only difference between the textual readings of the quotation in Heb 11:18 and Rom 9:7. However, Romans and

² References taken from the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* and Ryle (1895).

³ Westcott (1974, 366) pointed out that ὅτι is omitted by D₂*.

Hebrews apply the verse differently (Attridge 1989, 334). Rom 9:7, 8 functions rather as “kürzere exegetische Nachbemerkungen, die den Sinn des zuvor angeführten Schrifttextes sicherstellen oder erläutern sollen” (Koch 1986, 272).⁴ Gen 21:12b has its own clear accents in the context of Heb 11. In the words of Weiss (1991, 596): “Wie schon das wörtliche Zitat von Gen 21,12 in V.18 zeigt, folgt der Verweis auf das Beispiel des Abraham zunächst der entsprechenden biblischen Vorlage in Gen 22, setzt aber doch zugleich sehr deutliche eigene Akzente, die den paradoxen Charakter dieses Geschehens hervortreten lassen.” Gen 21:12b is a verbatim quotation from the LXX in both Rom 9:7 and Heb 11:18. It agrees with the transmitted reading of the LXX in its oldest available form (Koch 1986, 102). Koch lists this quotation amongst those which are difficult to determine whether they share a pre-Pauline history of usage by early Christianity or not and states that Gen 21:12b can probably only indirectly be connected with Paul (Koch 1986, 243). Atkinson argues similarly, saying that there is “no need to suppose that the one took from the other. The LXX is the common source” (1947, 47).

Justin quotes the extended section as found in Gen 21:12, including both parts of the verse—the section that occurred in Philo (v. 12a) as well as that which occurred in both Paul and Hebrews (v. 12b: . . . πάντα ὅσα ἂν εἴπῃ σοι Ζάρρα, ἄκουε τῆς φωνῆς αὐτῆς, ὅτι ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα, *Dial.* 56). The latter part represents exactly the same reading as in Romans and Hebrews and there are no differences regarding v. 12b (Kistemaker 1961, 51). The reading of the first part (v. 12a), however, differs between Philo and Justin.

Given the prominence of Gen 21 during the New Year, it is no surprise to find it playing a role in the Jewish tradition and being quoted also by the early Christian authors.

3.2. *Genesis 22:17 in Philo, Leg. 3.203; Heb 6:14; 1 Clem 32:2; Justin, Dial. 120*

Heb 6:14 represents the only place in the NT where Gen 22:17 is explicitly quoted. The same unknown author does refer to it again in Heb 11:12. The previous verse of Gen 22 (v. 16) is alluded to

⁴ Cf. Koch (1986, 272): “Das sachliche Verhältnis zwischen Zitat und Erläuterung kann dabei durchaus verschieden sein.”

just prior to the explicit quotation. The reading of the quotation differs from both the LXX and MT:

Gen 22:17 MT	Gen 22:17 LXX	Heb 6:14
כִּי־בָרַךְ אֱבְרָהָם וַיֹּדְבָה אֱבְרָהָם אֶת־נָדָן אֱלֹהֵי	ἡ μὴν εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω σε καὶ πληθύνων πληθυνῶ τὸ σπέρμα σου	εἰ μὴν εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω σε καὶ πληθύνων πληθυνῶ σε

Note the changes in the texts: (a) the Hebrew reading of the MT (כִּי־בָרַךְ) reads ἡ μὴν in the LXX and εἰ μὴν in Heb 6:14; (b) the LXX reads *I will multiply your seed* (πληθύνων πληθυνῶ τὸ σπέρμα σου) and Heb 6:14 reads only *I will multiply you* (πληθύνων πληθυνῶ σε). Attention was already drawn before to the fact that this change in Heb 6:14 creates a promise consisting of two clauses with identical endings (“I will bless you and I will multiply you”). “With this modification the promise of blessing is sharply focused upon Abraham” (Lane 1991a, 151; also Schröger 1968, 128). Fact is that the reading of Hebrews agrees neither with that of the MT nor with that of the LXX.

The Songs of Mary and Zechariah also “probably reflect something of the ancient promise given to the patriarch Abraham” (cf. Luke 1:55, 73) (Kistemaker 1961, 38). A further verse from the same section is quoted in Acts 3:25 (cf. Gen 22:18)—see Steyn (1995, 153–158) for a discussion on this quotation.

Turning to Philo, the passage of Gen 22:16ff. is again to be found with the same quotation of Gen 22:17 included. The last verse occurs again in 1 Clement and in Justin, while the previous verse is also to be found in Justin. We thus have v. 16 in Philo, v. 17 in Philo, Hebrews, 1 Clement and Justin, and v. 18 in Acts. This represents a well-established Jewish tradition, which was utilized, by a number of writers during this time (Köster 1961, 95–109). Also Weiss (1991, 359) thinks in this direction: “. . . daß er mit solcher Reflexion der Eigenart von Gottes eigenem Schwur zunächst in einer bestimmten jüdischen Überlieferung steht, die ihren wohl deutlichsten Niederschlag—im Grunde ganz analog zu Hebr 6,13–15—wiederum bei Philon gefunden hat.” When comparing the readings from Gen 22:17 as found in Philo, Heb 6:14, 1 Clement and Justin, the situation looks as follows:

Philo, <i>Leg.</i> 3.203 ⁵	Heb 6:14	1 Clem 32:2	Justin, <i>Dial.</i> 120
ἦ μὴν εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω σε καὶ πληθύνων πληθυνῶ τὸ σπέρμα σου	εἰ μὴν εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω σε καὶ πληθύνων πληθυνῶ σε	Ἔσται τὸ σπέρμα σου ὡς οἱ ἀστέρες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ	Καὶ εὐλογηθήσονται ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τῆς γῆς τῷ δὲ Ἰακώβ· Καὶ εὐλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου

The reading of Hebrews is close, but not identical, to that of Philo—whose reading, in turn, is identical to that of the LXX. According to Kistemaker (1961, 38) and others, this passage belonged, with that of Gen 21:12, to the Jewish New Year's festival liturgies, and was also used in the early Christian Easter vigil. It was well established in the Jewish and early Christian traditions as became clear from the occurrences in Philo, Acts, 1 Clement and Justin Martyr.

3.3. *Genesis 28:15 in Philo, Somn. 1; Justin, Dial. 58 / Deut 31:6 in Philo, Conf. 166; Heb 13:5*

Gen 28:15	<i>Somn.</i> 1	Justin, <i>Dial.</i> 58
Ὅτι οὐ μὴ σε ἐγκαταλίπω, ἕως τοῦ ποιῆσαί με πάντα ὅσα ἐλάλησα σοι	Ὅτι οὐ μὴ σε ἐγκαταλίπω, ἕως τοῦ ποιῆσαί με πάντα ὅσα ἐλάλησα σοι	Ὅτι οὐ μὴ σε ἐγκαταλίπω ἕως τοῦ ποιῆσαί με πάντα ὅσα ἐλάλησα σοι

Deut 31:6	Josh 1:5	<i>Conf.</i> 166	Heb 13:5
ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεὸς σου ὁ προπορευόμενος μεθ' ὑμῶν ἐν ὑμῖν οὐ μὴ σε ἀνῇ οὐτε μὴ σε ἐγκαταλίπη	Οὕτως ἔσομαι καὶ μετὰ σοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐγκαταλείψω σε οὐδὲ ὑπερόψομαί σε	οὐ μὴ σε ἀνῶ, οὐδ' οὐ μὴ σε ἐγκαταλίπω	οὐ μὴ σε ἀνῶ, οὐδ' οὐ μὴ σε ἐγκαταλίπω

⁵ Cf. also *Abr.* 273; *Somn.* 1.12; *QG* 4.180; *Sacr.* 90–93 (Weiss 1991, 359).

An interesting phenomenon can be observed here. It seems, on the one hand, as if Philo's *De somnis* and Justin's *Dialogue* are closer to the reading of Gen 28:15. The readings of Philo's *De confusione linguarum* and Heb 13:5, on the other hand, seem to be closer to the reading of Deut 31:6. Both Philo and the author of Hebrews ascribed their quotation here to be the words of God. It is important to note that the reading of Heb 13:5 agrees completely with that of Philo against the readings of the LXX and the MT. Some scholars thought that Hebrews was dependent upon Philo for his reading (Moffatt 1924, 229; Spicq 1952, 336), whilst others were of the opinion that it could not have been the case due to the different applications of the same quotation by the different authors (Williamson 1979, 570–73; Lane 1991b, 519). The solution to these intertextual connections was then looked for in a form of the quotation that might have been in circulation in the oral tradition through the preaching or liturgy of the Hellenistic synagogues in Alexandria (Delitzsch 1978, 669; Riggensbach 1922, 431; Michel 1966, 483–484; Schröger 1968, 194–96).

According to Westcott (1974, 434), followed by Katz (1950, 72), another option for the origin of the quotation was to look at Gen 28:15. It was argued by Katz (1958, 220–221; 1952, 523–525) that the text was combined from Gen 28:15 and “enlarged from the similar passages in Deut 31:6, 8 as found in the recension of the Old Greek version used by both Philo and Hebrews”. A variation of the same idea was proposed where the words of the quotation were seen to be dependent upon Josh 1:5 and supplemented by Deut 31:6 (Lane 1991b, 519; Westcott 1974, 434; Montefiore 1964, 240–241; Williamson 1979, 570; Thurén 1973, 218). These suggestions do not convince—just compare the reading of Josh 1:5. It is clear from the tables above that the readings of Philo (*Conf.* 166) and Hebrews (13:5) are similar to that of Deut 31:6 and that the readings of Philo (*Somn.* 1) and Justin (*Dial.* 58) all agree closely with that of Gen 28:15. It is more likely that we are dealing here with two strands (Gen 28:15 and Deut 31:6) of a similar tradition—both used by Philo in different works of his. One of these (Deut 31:6) is again followed by Hebrews and the other (Gen 28:15) by Justin.

There is thus another possibility to be proposed. If it is assumed that both Philo and Hebrews independently quoted from their Genesis source(s), and if the *Old Greek Version* (ogv), i.e. the first translation of the Pentateuch into Greek, was made from *a different Hebrew text*

than that known to us today in the form of the MT, then there is a real possibility that this coincidental reading between Philo and Hebrews, on the one hand, and that of Philo and Justin, on the other hand, is a remnant of that text. However, this does not explain the mere occurrence or use of the exact same quotation by both authors. Could Hebrews therefore had firsthand knowledge of Philo's writings?

3.4. *Numbers 12:7 in Philo, Leg. 3.33, 72, 81; Heb 3:5; 1 Clem 17:5, 43:1; Justin, Dial. 56.1*

Num 12:7	<i>Leg.</i> 3.33	<i>Leg.</i> 3.72	<i>Leg.</i> 3.81
Οὐχ οὕτως ὁ (a) θεράπων μου (b) Μωυσῆς· (c) ἐν ὄλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ μου (d) πιστός ἐστιν·	(b) Μωσεῖ δὲ ὅστις (d) πιστός (c) ἐν ὄλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ	(b) Μωϋσῆς λέγεται (d) πιστός (c) ἐν παντὶ τῷ οἴκῳ γεγενῆσθαι	(b) Μωϋσῆς ἄρχει μαρτυρούμενος, ὅτι ἐστὶ (d) πιστός (c) ὄλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ

Heb 3:5	1 Clem 17:5	1 Clem 43:1	Justin, <i>Dial.</i> 56.1
(b) Μωϋσῆς μὲν (d) πιστός (c) ἐν ὄλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ ὡς (a) θεράπων	(b) Μωϋσῆς (d) πιστός (c) ἐν ὄλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ ἐκλήθη	Ὅπου καὶ ὁ μακάριος (d) πιστός (a) θεράπων (c) ἐν ὄλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ (b) Μωϋσῆς	(b) Μωϋσῆς οὖν, ὁ μακάριος καὶ (d) πιστός (a) θεράπων θεοῦ

It is clear that this issue regarding Moses being called faithful with his entire house was a repetitive theme in Philo and in early Christianity. It is presented rather as a reference or as an allusion, than as an intended carefully quoted explicit citation. It is thus not really possible to compare the readings in order to see which of these correspond closer with each other. It is, nonetheless, clear that most of the basic elements in Num 12:7 are to be found back in the passages listed above. Note the order of the elements above as marked (a), (b), (c) and (d) in the table. All three occurrences in Philo follow the order b–d–c. Hebrews follows the same order b–d–c [–a]

and so does 1 Clem 17 (however, 1 Clem 43 has d-a-c-b). Justin has also b-d-a, which is similar to Hebrews, except for omitting element c. There seems thus to be a closer order amongst Philo, Hebrews and 1 Clement than with that of the LXX. Note, on the other hand, the fact that the early Christian literature included the term *θεράπων* from Num 12:7, a term that does not appear in Philo. Furthermore, *Codex Alexandrinus* inserts *ὥς* between *οὕτως* and *ὁ θεράπων* in Num 12:7—which, in turn, brings the reading the closest to that of Heb 3:5.

4. *The quest for the common denominator(s)*

What is thus the common denominator shared by Philo, Hebrews, Clemens Romanus and Justin? What are the possible explanations to be considered for these intertextual agreements? Why do the same passages occur in them and why are the readings so often in agreement with each other—sometimes against that of the LXX? The most obvious possibilities presented as explanation for this phenomenon, include the following:

4.1. *A shared common Hellenistic milieu*

It would not be uncommon for authors who share the same time span to share also the same thoughts, ideas and subject matter. They are writing from the perspective of their own historical context and would share the same worldview and perspectives in many cases. The time span from Philo (ca. 20 BC–AD 45) to Justin (died ca. AD 167) is one in which the Hellenistic ideas flourished. The same philosophical world of Neoplatonism and Gnosis was shared by all these writers. But why are the exact same quotations to be found in all these writers, though interpreted differently? One would expect some closer relationship than merely the common context of time and worldview.

4.2. *Direct literary interdependence upon each other*

Could this then perhaps mean that the authors were interdependent upon each other? There seem indeed to be enough evidence amongst scholars to assume that Clemens Romanus knew the book of Hebrews. Rees (1930, 1356) already assumed that due to the coincidences of

language and thought between Hebrews and 1 Clement, that Hebrews “was known in Rome toward the end of the 1st century AD”. Looking then at the overlap of Torah quotations between Philo and Hebrews, it is indeed striking that only one of the twelve quotations identified in Hebrews is not to be found in Philo. It is simply too coincidental that such a large amount of quotations from Philo are to be found in Hebrews, and many times with the same reading—sometimes against that of the LXX and MT. If Hebrews did not know and used Philo himself, then they knew the same literary and/or oral tradition. The issue of different interpretations and applications between Philo and Hebrews is not an argument that Hebrews could not have used Philo. The author of Hebrews could indeed still have been literary interdependent for the quotation as such, but applied it differently, probably consciously in order to reinterpret the Torah as an early Christian.

4.3. *Independent use of a “testimony book”*

There is definitely not enough evidence for the common and independent use of a so-called *Testimony Book* by these authors. One would then expect even greater similarities in text form and definitely the frequent occurrence of particular combinations, patterns, or sequences of quotations. Furthermore, the authors have different applications and interpretations of their quotations, even within their very own document.

4.4. *Sharing the same oral tradition*

What would such a shared oral tradition be? Did it consist of mere knowledge of the Scriptures in general? Or is it rather a reflection of a common liturgical tradition—possibly based on some of the Jewish feasts? This seems indeed to be a possibility with some of the quotations. It is clear—at least from the written tradition—that the author of Hebrews took up certain existing quotations from the early Jewish and early Christian traditions that existed prior to his own time and that he reinterpreted them in a Christological manner. These are again developed further by later early Christian writers such as Clemens Romanus and Justin who continued to expand on these quotations, to comment upon them, rework them and re-interpret them.

4.5. *Independent use of a common Vorlage in the literary tradition*

The possible independent use of a common *Vorlage* that might have been at hand to the different authors should be clearly distinguished from the existence of a common *Testimonia* collection. It could have been possible that they independently used the same version of the Scriptures. This might have been another form as that known to us in the reconstructed versions of the LXX and the MT. However, to prove such a possible independent use of a common *Vorlage* of their Scriptures above interdependency upon each other would be very difficult, although probably not impossible. The results of scholarship with regard to the *Vorlage* that Philo had at hand for his quotations seem to correspond in general and there seemed to be fairly broad consensus amongst scholars that it was some variant of the LXX. Compare the following:

- (i) According to Ryle (1895, xxxv) “. . . the passages quoted by Philo differ from the text which has been preserved in the chief Septuagint authorities”. Ryle refers to the previous study of Ziegfried (1872) who concluded, amongst others, that:
 - A large number of the references to Scripture in Philo’s writings are not citations, but paraphrases.
 - Biblical citations are frequently given which, although in agreement with the LXX, are yet inextricably blended (“verschmolzen”) with Philo’s interpretation.
 - In a not inconsiderable number of instances, we find a citation in Philo’s writings that partly differs from, and partly agrees with, the text presented by the LXX.
- (ii) According to Katz (1950, 95) “. . . the items of the preceding list all disclose a kind of text which either in parts of the quotations or throughout them differs from that of the LXX”. His conclusion: “The aberrant text represents a lost recension of the Pentateuch.” This position should be seen as being somewhat *versus* that of Amir (1983, 68) who concluded that “Philons Bibel ist ein griechischer Text, der ganz überwiegend mit unserer Septuaginta identisch ist”, saying that “. . . ich habe mich nirgendwo in seinen Schriften auch nur von Spuren einer Vertrautheit Philons mit dem hebräischen Text überzeugen können”. Katz’s position here is also against that of Williamson (1979, 498) who said: “The Bible used by Philo was the LXX.” Williamson (1979, 539–540) more refinely explains his understanding of Philo’s

“Bible” with the possibility “that there was in use at Alexandria a ‘texte standardisé’ of the LXX, and that this was used by both Philo and the Writer of Hebrews. Use of this standardised text of the LXX would explain some of the similarities of a textual character between the precise form of the OT quotations in Philo and those in Hebrews”.

4.6. *The role of a Christian editorial hand*

The fact that the readings of particularly the 5th century AD *Codex Alexandrinus* seem to be similar amongst Hebrews and 1 Clement in the same codex, could possibly point in the direction of an early Christian hand that might have brought the readings in closer agreement due to his knowledge of the readings as found in the NT. However, one would have expected then that the agreements would have been closer and that the manuscript witness tradition would have shown more evidence of variant readings.

4.7. *Geographical proximity*

If the hypothesis of previous scholarship, regarding Alexandria as place of origin and Rome as place of destination for the unknown book of Hebrews, is taken more seriously, then the geographical proximity of the authors under discussion here certainly would have played a role in their access to the same *Vorlage* and to each other's works. This could mean that the author of Hebrews wrote then from Alexandria (being thus also closely familiar with Philo's work there) and that he intended his work for the Christians in Rome. In turn, the works under discussion from Clement and Justin were possibly written from Rome. Could it thus be possible that these early Church Fathers in Rome knew Hebrews there when they wrote their documents? According to Williamson (1979, 497), Sowers already pointed in this direction by saying that “evidence of a group of LXX readings attested only in Philo and Hebrews, ‘plus the fact that Hebrews follows the *Codex Alexandrinus* seems to indicate a geographical proximity of both writers’”.

5. *Conclusion*

So what is the common denominator? An analysis of the data and a survey of the options offered by scholarship, points to the fact that the answer to this question is probably not to be found in any single possibility only, but rather in a combination of some of the options listed above. Points (c), the possible use of a so-called *Testimony Book*, and (f), the influence of an early Christian hand, might cautiously be eliminated. Point (a), the shared common Hellenistic milieu, sets the scene and forms the backdrop against which all this inter-textual activity took place. But more than the mere Hellenistic environment is involved here. The question is: Why are the *same* quotations and the *same* readings to be found? The answer should be looked for in (b) direct literary interdependence, (d) sharing the same oral tradition, (e) independent use of a common *Vorlage*, and (g) geographical proximity—either in any one of them, or in a combination of them. It would make sense to go the route of a combination of factors in the quest for the common denominator. Ellingworth (1979, 262) summarised the issue regarding the relation between Hebrews and Philo to be one that “has been variously understood as one of direct dependence” (Spicq 1949), “opposition” (Thomas 1959), “and complete independence” (Williamson 1979). He makes a number of important distinctions, most important probably the issue that literary dependence does not necessarily entail dependence of thought (1979, 263). This study poses the possibility that the author of Hebrews wrote from Alexandria to Christians in Rome and, being familiar with the works of Philo, made use of Philo’s Torah tradition. Clement of Rome (ca. AD 95) and Justin Martyr (ca. AD 165) all wrote later from Rome and, being familiar with the work of Hebrews, made use of his tradition in turn.

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AN “HERETICAL” USE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT:
A MANICHAEAN ADAPTATION OF MATT 6:19–20
IN P. KELL. COPT. 32

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ABSTRACT

P. Kell. Copt. 32 is a 4th century CE Manichaean personal letter to a woman catechumen belonging to the community at ancient Roman Kellis in the Dakhleh Oasis in Egypt. The letter incorporates Matt 6:19–20 within various descriptions of the catechumen as a person of high spiritual standing. The paper presents an analysis of the letter writer’s adaptation of this passage as well as other less obvious passages from the Gospel of Matthew, together with Manichaean sources that may have influenced the choice of images of the “good tree” and spiritual stewardship. This use of the Gospel of Matthew will be set within the broader context of the Manichaean use of Christian canonical scriptures.

P. Kell. Copt. 32 is one of the many letters written in Greek or Coptic found at ancient Roman Kellis (or Ismant el-Kharab) in the Dakhleh Oasis in Egypt, and dating from the 4th century CE (Gardner 1999, 213–217).¹ The Kellis letters written in Greek are business or legal documents for the most part, while the Coptic letters tend to be personal letters, although sometimes connected with aspects of the business life of the community as well. Unlike the Greek letters, many of the personal letters in Coptic are by and to women, some of whom can be identified as members of the small Manichaean community at Kellis. This community lives among townsfolk who are presumably developing into a distinctly Christian community, having abandoned the temple of their local Egyptian deity Tutu for their new Christian churches (Bowen 2000; 2002; 2003). Iain Gardner (1996, xii) estimates that Manichaeans were in Kellis by the early 4th century CE, and remained until about the 390s when the site was abandoned.

¹ The text was found in the third of four houses excavated on the site of Kellis, and the environment of the texts from this house (from the evidence of coins and other material) appears to span most of the 4th century CE (Gardner 1996, x, xii).

P. Kell. Copt. 32 is a personal letter written by a Manichaean spiritual father to his spiritual daughter, probably named Eirene (Gardner 1999, 24).² For the purposes of this paper, we shall name her as such. Whilst the letter is important within the group of letters connected with women for what it can tell us about the spiritual life of women believers and their importance to the community, this paper will focus on another issue, namely the use of Christian canonical scripture by the letter writer and its function within the letter and what that implies for the relationship of Manichaeism to Christianity as the latter developed in 4th century Egypt. The use of a Matthean text in the letter has importance both for the description of Eirene's role as catechumen, and for our understanding of how the Manichaeans viewed and used at least one text from the canonical Christian scriptures.

There are a number of possibilities for the identity of the letter writer. Apart from the Manichaean family that appears in many documents and letters from Kellis, there may have been a monastery of Elect somewhere very close to the town, as Gardner (2000, 247–257) has postulated. There was certainly a high-ranking Elect, known simply as “the Teacher” in Kellis documents, who travelled in the Nile Valley and corresponded with the community from time to time. Perhaps it is he, or one of the Elect in the monastery, who is the author of the letter.³

In the opening verses of the letter, Eirene is described as a catechumen (ΤΚΛΘΗΧΟΥΜΕΝΗ; vv. 3), which term identifies her official standing within the community. Her good standing spiritually is clear from the various titles and images used of her—she is a “daughter of the holy church” (ΤΩΕΡΕ ΝΤΕΚΚΛΗCΙΑ ΕΤΟΥΑΒΕ; vv. 1–2), “God-loving, good-loving” (ΝΗΔΙΝΟΥΤΕ ΝΗΔΙΓΑΘΟΝ; vv. 18–19). Above all, what is of particular interest here for understanding the person of Eirene is the image used of her as a good steward or careful householder (vv. 7–13), as well as the associated image of the good tree—“the good tree whose fruit never withers, which is your love that emits radiance every day” (vv. 4–5).

² Gardner does question whether this is an actual name or whether it is the salutation “peace”. The name is not significant for this paper. If it is not Eirene, what is said here refers to a female believer of the community.

³ Gardner (1999, 213–4) postulates Theognostos as author of both letters 32 and 33, but admits there is not enough evidence to make any firm judgment about the authorship.

It is immediately clear with the image of stewardship that the letter writer knows Matt 6:19–20 and is adapting the text to use it in praise of Eirene.

- 7 . . . ΤΕΤΑΘ
 8 [Χ]ΠΟ ΝΕΘ ΠΗΝΕΣΧΡΗΝΑ
 9 [ΔΘ]ΔΑΛΩΟΥ ΔΗΕΖΩΡ ΕΤΖΙ
 10 [Π]Χ[Ι]ΘΕ ΕΤΕ ΝΑΡΕ ΖΑΛΕ ΔΗ
 11 ΗΔΙΤ' ΟΥΔΕ ΝΑΡΕ ΔΗΕΤΗΘ
 12 [Χ]ΑΧΤ' ΑΡΑΥ ΑΧΙΟΥΕ; ΕΤΕ Π
 13 [ΤΑ]Υ ΝΕ ΠΡΗ ΜΗ ΠΟΖ' . . .

She who has acquired for herself her riches and stored them in the treasures that are in the heights, where moths shall not find a way, nor shall thieves dig through to them to steal; which (storehouses) are the sun and the moon.

The passage is not in the form of an exhortation as it appears in the Gospel, but rather describes Eirene as a person who has already fulfilled the demands of that exhortation. Second, the letter provides more detail on the storehouses in the heavens/heights (i.e. the sun and moon) and in doing so gives the passage its distinctly Manichaean flavour. Within the Manichaean system, the sun and moon are ships of light via which Light released from the darkness and the souls of believers rise to the Light after death.⁴

The text relates that Eirene's treasure is light stored in the sun and moon. The theme of light is first introduced in the description of Eirene as the good tree. Her fruit is connected with Light and the heart—it is “your love that emits radiance every day”—so it appears that her fruit is also a storehouse or source of light that is emitted. Both the image of the tree with fruits of light and the steward who stores up treasure of light imply that Eirene releases or emits light in some way by her good deeds on behalf of the Elect or the community. In Manichaean teaching, the Light trapped in the darkness of the material world can be released by the Manichaean Elect as they eat fruit and vegetables.⁵ We would not normally expect this kind of praise or the use of this kind of imagery except for one of the Elect. In particular, to suggest this activity of Eirene's almsgiving

⁴ See, for example, *Manichaean Psalm Book* (hereafter PsB) 151.31–152.8 in which Jesus is described as “steering the ship of the moon, ferrying souls to the Light” (Allberry 1938).

⁵ See, for example, the (polemical) description of the meal by Augustine in *Faust*. 2.5 (Stothert 1994; Migne 1841–1842 [Latin]).

to the Elect sets her in the same kind of spiritual heights as the Elect who release the light. In all probability she will remain a catechumen, serving the Elect through her work in the community, but for the letter writer she has achieved a kind of spiritual perfection without the necessity of joining the ranks of the Elect.

Gardner points out that this is the only Kellis letter yet noted, that contains reasonably direct quotations from the NT. While he notes the use of Matt 6:19–20, in commenting on the letter in the notes to the edition (1999, 216), it could be argued that there is much more use of the Gospel of Matthew in this letter than these two verses, particularly passages that deal with treasures or with a good householder. I would contend that Matt 6:19–20 should also be seen in conjunction here with at least Matt 12:35 and Matt 13:52.

The first of the two texts, in Matt 12:35, describes a good and a bad/evil man, the first who brings good things from the good treasure, and the latter who brings bad things from his bad treasure. We are told in the linking verse 12:34 that good and evil words come from the heart, and in the concluding verses 12:36–37, the good and bad things are quite clearly related to words that justify and condemn. Thus, the one who stores up treasure in heaven, where his heart is in 6:19–21, and the one whose heart is the storehouse for good treasure (good words) in Matt 12:35 are the same spiritual type. But further to this passage, we read in the introduction to the section in 12:33: “Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad” followed by the linking verse to 12:35. Good treasure and good fruit, a good storehouse or heart and a good tree are strongly connected—and we have already noted the same connections for Eirene.

One further passage from the letter should be noted in relation to the general context of Matt 12. In the later section of the letter, we find an exhortation to Eirene to lay the foundations of her house and fight for ease therein, to fight to complete the work so that the thief cannot dig in. It is possible that the writer is freely using a text like the PsB 188.25–189.29 in which the believer is exhorted to build with treasures—the gold of virginity, the silver of continence, the jewels of prayers—upon the foundation/foundation stone of the saviour, Christ, and not to build in the night so that the thief may seize the house.⁶ However, it is also possible that the letter writer

⁶ Of course 1 Cor 3:11 is also at play here. See also Psalm to Jesus 245: “Comfort thyself, stem thy tears, o loved one; good is the profit (?) of thy treasure (χρημα),

has reached just a little further back from Matt 12:35 to the passage about the strong man's house in 12:29: "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his property, without first tying up the strong man? Then indeed the house can be plundered."

The second text from Matt 13:52 compares the scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven, or one trained for the kingdom of heaven, with the master of the house who brings new and old things from his treasure. At first glance, the connection of discipleship and "treasurer" in relation to Eirene may seem rather tenuous. However we should note that this is the culminating parable in this section of the Gospel, the previous three parables concerned with treasure that is found or worked for: 13:44—treasure hidden in a field; 13:45–46—the pearl of great value; and 13:47–48—the catch of good fish from the sea.

A connection between discipleship or following Jesus and treasure is also made in the Manichaean Tebessa Codex, in fact using Matt 6:20, albeit less clearly and in company with other NT texts:

- 1 a[ll(?) followed(?)
- 2 him so [that]
- 3 they desi[red] rather
- 4 to obtain [heav]enly taberna-
- 5 [c]les and (that) wealth
- 6 of good thin[gs], whi[ch]
- 7 once given, is not
- 8 able to be tak[en] away [.] (BeDuhn and Harrison 1997, 46)⁷

In summary then, we must consider that Eirene may well be presented here as the ideal disciple, even as Matt 13:52 presents that ideal, and that the letter writer is calling on the Gospel of Matthew for his imagery throughout the letter, not just within the clearly adapted passage from 6:19–20. While other Manichaean texts frequently use similar imagery, especially of treasure and trees,⁸ or even

for thou hast set the foundation of thy tower (πύργος) upon the rock (πέτρα) of Christ" (PsB 53.21–23).

⁷ BeDuhn and Harrison (1997, 46) cite Luke 16:9 and 10:42, as well as Matt 6:20, Luke 12:33, Matt 19:29, Mark 10:29–30, and Luke 18:29–30 as possible NT sources.

⁸ In Victoria Arnold-Döben's small volume on Manichaean imagery, the first section on the tree takes nearly 15% of the book's content, and we know from the *Kephalaia* and elsewhere that the parable of the good and bad tree is a particular favourite of Mani's when teaching (Arnold-Döben 1978, 7–44). Treasure is a more flexible image, appearing in its own right but also in related images like the pearl, and the treasure house or storehouse.

of trees of treasure or jewels,⁹ the points of connection with the Matthean texts are strong in this letter.

Finally we should note an interesting parallel of treasures and giving alms is also found in the Turkish Manichaean text T II D 173b, 2 again with a quote from the Gospel of Matthew, in this case Matt 10:42.

And the Messiah Buddha . . . deigned to say this: "Throw away this (your) evil possession which belongs to the demons, and give it as alms to a very needy elect. (But) you (yourself) go hungry, you (yourself) endure pain and thus fill your treasure-house in eternity. And with your whole heart believe this: the reward for (a piece of) bread and a cup of water (given as alms) will never vanish, but is sure." (Klimkeit 1993, 326)

What we can conclude is that the letter uses Matt 6:19–20 outright, other Matthean passages as a basis for spiritual imagery, as well as Manichaean scripture and imagery to press home its point about Eirene. Of great interest is the mix of both sets of scriptures; the Matthean flavour of the letter is strong to complement other possible influences from distinctly Manichaean writings, some of them in turn heavily influenced by the Gospel of Matthew.

The use of the NT in Manichaean texts is not a rarity, and the use of the Gospel of Matthew is well documented in major Manichaean texts. In the PsB, for example, Matt 6:19–20 occurs in three Manichaean Psalms (52.31; 63.10; 66.31), the first describing the soul who has laid up treasures in the heavens; the second and third, used of the psalmist who has laid up an imperishable treasure in a place to which thieves cannot find a way.¹⁰ Matt 6:21, which completes the major passage under consideration—"where your treasure is, there will your heart also be"—occurs five times in the major teaching text of the *Kephalaia*.¹¹

Apart from Matt 6:19–20, Matthean passages are frequently quoted or alluded to in Manichaean work. Much of PsB 39.19–22, for example, quotes or alludes to Matt 5:22, 23–25, 44, 48; 7:1; 22:39. The

⁹ In the *Manichaean Chinese Hymn Scroll*, for example, Jesus is described as the Tree of Life, adorned with many incomparable and wonderful jewels, giving wisdom through its fruits, and being an unfailing treasure house with all kinds of jewels for the poor and needy (H. 7–8, 12, 14) (Schmidt-Glintzer, 1987).

¹⁰ For the list of Matthean passages in the Psalm Book, see Allberry (1938, 47*–48*).

¹¹ See the biblical citations listed in Gardner (1995, 307).

parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins, from Matt 25:1–13, forms the basis of PsB 154.1–21.¹² The final judgment by the god Xradeshahr (equivalent to Jesus the Splendour) in the *Shābuhragān*, is heavily reliant on the scene of Jesus' eschatological judgment in Matt 25:31–46 (MacKenzie 1979, 500–534). The coming of Jesus the Splendour to Adam, in which Jesus cuts down bad trees, burns them, and plants good trees to produce good fruit, is described in *Keph.* 53.18–54.9, with clear allusion to Matt 3:10 (Arnold-Döben 1980, 14–15). This list represents only a small sample of what can be found in Manichaean texts.

The Gospel of Matthew also occurs frequently in the debates between Augustine and his Manichaean opponents, although here there is a mixture of both polemic and critical judgment of the Matthean passages as well as their use as inspirational or authoritative scripture. Faustus (*Faust.* 3.1), for example, is described as presenting an argument against an incarnation of Jesus the Apostle based, in part, on discrepancies he finds between the genealogies of the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of Matthew (Stohtert 1994; Migne 1841–1842). Of course, this is Augustine reporting an argument, so caution must be exercised in what might be extrapolated concerning Manichaean belief. Whatever the case, however, the character of Faustus as presented by Augustine is very familiar with the canonical Christian scriptures.

Although the text of the letter is clearly based on Matt 6:19–20 conceptually (apart from the seemingly minor point that the letter omits the reference to rust), the writer has not used the vocabulary of either the Greek or Coptic canonical versions as his base. The passage has certain similarities in part with the Coptic over against the Greek in the parallels with the digging by the thief, and the words for “treasuries” (ΔΗΕΖΩΡ), “moths” (ΖΑΛΕ) and “to steal” (ΞΙΟΥΕ) (Horner 1969a; 1969b). However, it uses more Greek terms than the Coptic—though not the Greek of Matthew—e.g. χρῆμα instead of θησαυρούς and ληστής instead of κλέπται. This last point raises the question of what kind of source the Manichaeans—or at least the letter writer—were using. Of course it is possible that the Manichaeans may have had the sources as we have them but simply used terms more meaningful to them, or saw no need to keep exactly

¹² See also PsB 191.30–192.1.

to the text as it was, or the letter writer was quoting incorrectly from memory, but the question of sources is an area for investigation that we cannot pursue here.

The way in which the letter writer presents the Matthean text as description rather than exhortation evidences a real freedom in changing the format of the original to suit a different genre and in adding words of more significance to Manichaeism. On the other hand, there is no question that the Matthean text is considered authoritative in providing strong spiritual images.

P. Kell. Copt. 32 is a warm personal letter to a beloved daughter, full of praise and love for her, and asking favours as the writer must have done so many times before, and as we find in other letters to the women at Kellis. As one of the Manichaean women on the oasis, we know that she is likely to be involved in business, most likely either weaving or tailoring, mentioned in both the Greek and Coptic Kellis letters. Indeed, from the evidence of P. Kell. Copt. 33, she is apparently making garments for the male elect who writes to her, presumably for alms giving.

While the image of the good steward or careful householder may be apt in light of Eirene's role as a good businesswoman or skilled craftswoman in the community—and perhaps this has prompted the letter writer's use of the Matthean images—they are also strong religious images. That these particular images are used of Eirene show that both in Matthean and in Manichaean terms she is highly regarded as a believer, and this despite the fact that she is only a catechumen.

The use of Matthew in the private letter argues against the older view that Manichaeans only used the Christian scriptures in trying to convert Christians to their religion. This is a private letter from one Manichaean to another. Manichaeans obviously claimed at least the Gospel of Matthew as scriptural material for their own use, and not limited to Christians. We know too that Mani himself regarded Jesus as his personal saviour and his teachings as authoritative (Franzmann 2003, 15–26).

In one way, the mixture of Matthean and Manichaean elements in the letter mimics the setting in which it was read. In the broader Kellis environment, we know from other letters and the layout of the town that Manichaeans and Christians existed side by side in this isolated outpost even while in Alexandria Christians were warned to be careful of Manichaean missionaries as early as the end of the previous century (Lieu 1992, 115).

The letter is a small piece of personal history from a fairly isolated oasis, and yet it asks the big questions about how religions deal with each other and get along. It urges us to think carefully about the way to define particular religious traditions and how to define religion in general and orthodoxy in particular. Manichaeans were—and sometimes still are—painted in the darkest of colours by the guardians of orthodoxy in the Christian Church and yet here is a text that signals so forcefully the Manichaean appreciation of the very same so-called “orthodox” tradition of strong images of discipleship, spiritual riches, and good works in the Gospel of Matthew.

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AUGUSTINE, PAUL AND THE MANICHEES

Annemaré Kotzé

ABSTRACT

Against the background of a bigger argument about the protreptic purpose and Manichaean audience of Augustine's *Confessions*, this essay examines the Manichaean subtext in the penultimate section of book 13. The focus is mainly on the subsection 13.25.38–13.27.42 where, I argue, the Genesis verses to be interpreted (Gen 1:29–30) are used merely as a pretext for what is, in fact, an interpretation of Paul's ideas on almsgiving. The passage has a polemical and emotional tone that only falls into place when it is read as a counterfoil to Manichaean claims that the existence of the orders of the Elect and the Auditors and their respective tasks within Manichaean liturgy are justified by Paul's views. The contents of the (albeit fragmentary) Tebessa Codex seems to corroborate this interpretation of the passage. On the whole my argument that Augustine envisaged a potential Manichaean audience for the *Confessions* is validated.

My research on the communicative purpose and audience of the *Confessions* originated in a belief that a greater focus on literary practices and religious realities of the fourth century AD may bring us closer to reading Augustine's great work on its own terms. This was eventually narrowed down to a study of, first, the extent to which the communicative purpose of the work is a protreptic purpose, that is: the purpose to convert its readers; and second, the degree to which the text of the *Confessions* defines the potential Manichaean reader as the one targeted by many of its strategies, including its protreptic strategy. This essay constitutes a small strand in this latter argument: I try to show that the last section of Augustine's allegorical exposition of Genesis in book 13 of the *Confessions* is—contrary to general scholarly opinion—heavily underpinned by a concern with the potential Manichaean reader. The interpretation of the Genesis verses up for discussion in this passage (*Conf.* 13.25.38–13.27.42) constitutes, in fact, an interpretation of Paul's views on the provision of material support to ministers of the church, expressed in various letters.

The background to the arguments presented here is, put very concisely, that I see the autobiographical section of the *Confessions* (books 1–9) as a conversion story included in a bigger work for the purposes of converting its reader. I contend that precedents for this combination of autobiographical writing with exegetical and polemical writing (which we find in *Conf.* 10–13) exist in both pagan and Christian literature of the preceding period.¹ Furthermore I show that throughout the work the potential Manichaean reader is a significant element of the intended audience of the *Confessions*. This challenges traditional scholarship that acknowledges vestiges of Augustine's Manichaean past in the *Confessions* but that assumes the main intended audience of the work to be Augustine's inner circle, his fellow Christians.²

The assumption that fellow Christians are constantly the audience foremost in Augustine's mind would of course be at odds with my contention that the conversion story is meant to have the purpose to convert, i.e. a protreptic purpose. However, it is important to remember that protreptic from its inception went hand in hand with paraenetic. That is, what was meant as a call to conversion (protreptic) was usually at the same time intended to strengthen the resolve of those who had already made the choice to continue on the chosen path (paraenetic). Thus, if protreptic and paraenetic communicative purposes can co-exist naturally in the same work, it follows that fellow Christians and the not yet converted could equally naturally form two complementary segments of the audience targeted by this text. So, I concede that Augustine's fellow Christians constitute an important part of the intended audience of the *Confessions* (more so

¹ Prominent examples are Plotinus' *Enneads* prefaced by the *Vita Porphyrii* and Iamblichus' *De vita Pythagorica* that starts with the vita of Pythagoras (followed by the protreptic and then by the philosophical discussion proper). Use of the exemplary force of the personal example for protreptic purposes was already present in Plato's early Socratic dialogues. Malherbe's discussion (1986, 34–37) of the moral philosophers' convention to use autobiographical narratives as a preface to their own works, names Julian's *Oration* and Epictetus' *Discourse* 3 as cases in point. This also indicates another possible function of the autobiographical section in Augustine's *Confessions*: the autobiographical preface (although in the case of the *Confessions* the autobiographical section is clearly much more than a preface) often had the function of justifying the "activity as moral reformers" and illustrating "the rigorous self-examination required before daring to correct others" (Malherbe 1986, 34). *The Dialogus cum Tryphone* by Justin Martyr, saint Cyprian of Carthage's *Ad Donatum*, and the *De Trinitate* by Hilary of Poitiers offer precedents for the combination of autobiographical elements with argumentation that can be called polemical, philosophical, and/or exegetical. See the discussion in my *Augustine's Confessions: Communicative Purpose and Audience* (2004, 66–84).

² See for example Brown's remarks in this regard (2000, 152–153).

in the last four books than in the first nine)³ but I try to show that throughout the work, the urgent desire to turn the potential Manichaean reader around to the Catholic way of thinking is much more prominent than many scholars have been willing to concede up to now.

However, complementary to this perspective is one that concerns religious realities of Augustine's day. It is very probable that for many Christians in Hippo the gulf that we now tend to perceive between Catholic and Manichaean ideas simply did not exist. This is, to my mind, attested by the fact that the Pelagians could conceive of Augustine as being a crypto-Manichee while preaching and acting as a Catholic bishop.⁴ The normal members of Augustine's Catholic congregation would have been in constant contact with Manichean Christians who targeted them with disconcerting questions like "What did God do before he created the earth?" or "Does God have hair and nails?" This means that, when I argue for a Manichaean subtext present throughout the *Confessions*, I go on the assumption that these arguments concern both the potential Manichaean reader and the Catholic exposed to Manichaean polemic on a daily basis. This implies once again, the combination of a proreptic and a paraenetic communicative purpose.

In order to follow my analysis of the section of book 13 that forms the subject of this essay, there are a few other issues concerning Manichaeism that we have to keep in mind while we look at the passage. First, Augustine joined the Manichaeans during his student years in Carthage and, although this is difficult to believe in the light of the scathing remarks against Manichaeism in many of his works, he remained an adherent of this Christian sect for all of nine years. What is more, during this time he was an active proselytizer, responsible for many conversions to Manichaeism.

Secondly, one of the main issues on which Catholic and Manichaean Christians differed were their ideas about the Bible. The Manichaeans

³ The references usually adduced to prove that fellow Christians are the most important intended audience are mostly from the last four books, where Augustine makes a number of explicit remarks about the purpose of the *Confessions*. I (Kotzé 2004) have argued that the first nine books may be read as a proreptic, in many ways designed to convert a potential Manichaean reader. In the last four books the reader who has already been convinced (perhaps through the conversion story he or she has just read) and who accepts Augustine's bona fides initially seems to be the one Augustine is mainly concerned with. The subject matter of these books remains, however, issues that were of special concern for the debate between Catholics and Manichaeans (the issue of time and the validity of the book of Genesis).

⁴ See for example O'Donnell's remarks in this regard (1992, 2:34–35).

proclaimed themselves intellectuals (they did not expect blind faith, like the Catholics, so they professed) and they rejected the whole of the Old Testament. They accepted only those sections of the NT that withstood the test of their reason and were especially fond of Paul, whom they often quoted (as we know from, for example, Augustine's remarks in the *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*).⁵

Lastly, to follow my arguments in this essay, some aspects concerning the eating ritual that formed an integral part of the daily liturgy of Manichaean religious practice are relevant. The Manichaeans believed, in what seems a typically literal way of thinking that characterized many aspects of their dogma, that particles of the divine (light particles) were imprisoned in all flesh as well as in plants. These particles had to be handled with special care. The Elect of the sect (who comprised a small percentage of the adherents, the most advanced members) lived according to strict ascetic rules and were not allowed to procure their own food (having fruit removed was a traumatic experience for the tree). This duty was relegated to the Auditors, who made up the larger body of the members of the Manichaean Church.

This latter group was not required to adhere as closely to the ascetic rules. (Augustine himself remained an Auditor throughout his nine years as a Manichee.) The Auditors partook in an elaborate daily ritual of presenting food to the Elect and were apparently forgiven for the sin of picking the fruit and vegetables through a prayer by the Elect as they received the food. The light particles imprisoned in the food—they believed—were set free to return to the deity through the physical digestive processes of the Elect, as Augustine explains (albeit in a very sarcastic tone) in book 3 of the *Confessions* (see discussion below).⁶

This essay focuses in some detail only on one small section (13.25.38–13.27.42) of what is generally called the allegorical exposition of the Genesis creation story in book 13 of the *Confessions*, but it is also an argument for my interpretation of the work as a whole. To enable the reader to follow my arguments below I give here the main points of my analysis of the main body of book 13 in a table.⁷

⁵ See for example *Mor. eccl.* 1.2, 8.13 or 9.14.

⁶ For an enlightening discussion of Manichaean alimentary rites, see BeDuhn (2000, 126–162).

⁷ To prevent visual crowding I use in the table only the last number of the traditional three number system to refer to individual paragraphs. I see this analysis as a representation of one of the patterns emerging from this section of a multi-dimensional text and not as the only possible reading.

	Paragraphs	Creation day	Genesis verse	Theme
A. Paraenetic discourse to the members of the congregation	1 13–15	1	Gen 1:3–5: <i>fiat lux</i> ⁸ [Eph 5:8: <i>fuimus aliquando tenebras nunc autem lux</i> ; 2 Cor 5:7: <i>Et tamen adhuc per fidem, nondum per speciem</i>]	The faithful may hope in spite of present imperfect conditions
	2 16–19	2	Gen 1:6–8: <i>fiat firmamentum in medio aquarum</i> [Isa 34:4: <i>caelum plicabitur sicut liber</i>]	The faithful must accept the value and the authority of scripture
	3 20–25	3 & 4	Gen 1:9–19: <i>fructus & lumina</i>	The faithful are exhorted to bear fruit and to shine like a light in heaven (i.e. to do good works)
	4 26–31	5 & 6	Gen 1:20–25: <i>crescite et multiplicamini</i>	The faithful must value the preaching and the example of God's ministers
B. Protreptic discourse to the Manichaeans	1 32–34	6 (cont)	Gen 1:26–27: <i>faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram</i> [Rom 12:2: <i>reformamini in novitate mentis vestrae</i>]	Man created in the image of God (a verse the Manichaeans found offensive)
	2 35–37	6 (cont)	Gen 1:28: <i>crescite et multiplicamini</i>	Figurative interpretation of scripture (a verse the Manichaeans found offensive)
	3 38–42	6 (cont)	Gen 1:29–30: <i>ecce dedi vobis omne pabulum seminale . . . ad escam</i>	The fruit of good works lies in the attitude with which they are performed (about the Manichaean eating ritual)
	4 43–45	6 (cont)	Gen 1:31: <i>et vidit deus omnia quae fecit et ecce bona valde</i>	God created everything good (criticism of Manichaean cosmology)

⁸ The Genesis text used here is the one provided in O'Donnell (1992, 3:344–345).

The A section of the allegorical exposition I describe as a paraenetic discourse aimed, indeed, primarily at the fellow Catholic reader. However, here the focus is on the B section. As far as the last subsection of the B section is concerned, scholars are in agreement that this is a critique of Manichean views of creation (i.e. it has special importance for a Manichaean reader).⁹ But as the table illustrates, I argue that the preoccupation with issues of special concern to a Manichaean audience surfaces strongly already in paragraph 32. This would constitute, then, a much more sustained last effort to penetrate the defences of the Manichaean reader, significantly, here at the end of the *Confessions*, than is generally acknowledged. If this is so, my argument for the importance of the Manichaean reader as the intended reader of the work as a whole, is strengthened considerably.

Before I come to subsection 3, the main focus of my analysis here, a quick look at subsections 1 and 2 will further elucidate the arguments made below. The Genesis verses up for interpretation in subsection 1 (13.22.32–13.23.34) are Gen 1:26–27, and especially the phrase *faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram*. The Manichaeans accused the Catholics (on the grounds of their acceptance of this verse) of worshipping an anthropomorphic God, as Augustine describes himself doing in book 3 of the *Confessions* (see below). Thus, a satisfactory explanation of this verse is a *sine qua non* for an interpretation of Genesis 1 that has to convince a Manichaean reader. In addition, the explanation is corroborated by the words of none other than Paul, the apostle whose authority the Manichees did recognize.¹⁰

About subsection 2 of the B section, a quick remark must suffice: 13.24.35–37 discusses another phrase from Genesis that the Manichaeans found particularly offensive, namely the command to man to increase and multiply. (Procreation was prohibited to the Manichaean Elect because it implied the perpetuation of the imprisonment of divine particles in sinful flesh.) Augustine's explanation (that this refers to the multiplicity of ways in which intellectual concepts may be expressed) is certainly amongst other things an effort to show the Manichaean reader that even this verse may be explained—

⁹ See, e.g., O'Donnell (1992, 2:343).

¹⁰ Paul was frequently quoted as an authority by the Manichees and is often called "the apostle of the Manichees".

figuratively—in a perfectly acceptable manner. As in the case of the next subsection, as I illustrate below, Augustine is at great pains not to pass off a glib interpretation, but to show his own struggle with the text and to invoke God's help and authority.

Subsection 3 of the B section (13.25.38–13.27.42) is not generally recognized as containing references to issues relevant to Manichaeism. However, there is internal as well as external evidence that this is indeed the case. Let us start with the internal evidence. Gen 1:29–30 (God's permission to man to eat the fruits of the earth) seems at first sight non-problematic. But the section is characterized by a heightened emotional tone that warns the reader that something more is at stake here. First, before he introduces the Genesis verses, Augustine starts 13.25.38 with five and a half lines of affirming the authority of what he is about to say and claiming God's sanction for his views:

Volo etiam dicere, domine deus meus, quod me consequens tua scriptura commonet, et dicam nec verebor. Vera enim dicam te mihi inspirante quod ex eis verbis voluisti ut dicerem. Neque enim alio praeter te inspirante credo me verum dicere, cum tu sis veritas, omnis autem homo mendax . . . ergo ut verum loquar, de tuo loquor. (Lord, my God, I also want to declare what the following text of your scripture suggests to me, and I will say it without fear. With you inspiring me I shall be affirming true things, which by your will I draw out of those words. For I do not believe I give a true exposition if anyone other than you is inspiring me. You are the truth but every man is a liar [Ps 115:11; Rom 3:4] . . . Therefore I depend on you to enable me to speak the truth.)¹¹

Only then does he return to his subject and bring the reader back to the issue at hand:

Dicebamus enim eis terrae fructibus significari et in allegoria figurari opera misericordiae. (We were saying [this refers back to parr. 20–25 where he spoke about the bearing of fruit] that these fruits of the earth are to be allegorically interpreted as meaning works of mercy.)

At the beginning of 13.26.39 the interpretation, however, takes an unexpected turn:

Pascuntur autem his escis qui laetantur eis, nec illi laetantur eis, quorum deus venter. Neque enim et in illis qui praebent ista, ea quae dant fructus est, sed quo animo dant. (Those who enjoy these foods are fed by them; but those

¹¹ I use O'Donnell's text (1992) and Chadwick's translation (1991) of the *Confessions*.

“whose god is their belly” [Phil 3:19] derive no pleasure from them. But in those who provide the food, the fruit lies not in what they give but the spirit with which they give it.)

These opening sentences already contain the essence of the argument following it: the receiver of a donation is not fed by what he receives but by his delight in the spirit in which it was given. It is not the literal circumstance of people giving that constitutes the point of Paul’s writings, but the spiritual fruit, the right moral motivation of the giver. I argue that the words *eis terrae fructibus* in the Genesis verse serve merely as a springboard for an interpretation (clearly *contra Manichaeos*) of Paul’s views on good works and that this forms the heart of the section.

Let us look again at the words quoted above. The question is: why do people whose belly is their god, take no pleasure in food? The phrase “whose god is their belly” comes from Phil 3:19 where it probably refers to the worldliness of people who take excessive pleasure in food. I argue that this contradictory statement in the *Confessions* constitutes, in fact, an apt description of Manichaean notions about food. They believed that eating or chewing inflicted pain on the food, that trees and plants cried when their fruit were removed and that the meals of the Elect involved the critical process of handling particles of the divine. For them eating involved anything but pleasure.

A closer scrutiny of the phrase *quorum deus venter* and the context it alludes to provides another important clue pointing to the Manichees. The phrase is, as I have said, a quotation from Phil 3:18–19 where Paul exhorts his reader to follow his example and to beware of being ruled by the flesh:

Multi enim ambulant, quos saepe dicebam vobis, nunc autem et flens dico, inimicos crucis Christi: quorum finis interitus, quorum deus venter, et gloria in confusione ipsorum, qui terrena sapiunt. (For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things.)¹²

Augustine’s choice of words at other places in the *Confessions* seems to indicate that in his mind an association between this verse and the Manichees exists. First, the adjective *inimicus* has been used in

¹² All translations of quotations from the Bible are from the NRSV.

Conf. 9.4.11 to refer to this group (here *inimici scripturae*, “enemies of Scripture”).¹³ We also know that the Manichees could aptly be described as enemies of the cross of Christ because of their beliefs that Christ lived on earth only in a pseudo body and did not die a real death on the cross.

Then, the other two underlined phrases have already been used (the first in part, and the second in full) to refer to the Manichees in earlier sections of the *Confessions*. The phrase *terrena sapiunt* is used of them in book 5 where Manichaean aid in promoting Augustine’s secular career is described. The remarks in *Conf.* 3.10.18 are more interesting and make clear that in Augustine’s mind the eating ritual of the Elect did come very close to literally making the stomachs of this group their god:

Sensim atque paulatim perductus ad eas nugas, ut crederem ficum plorare, cum decerpitur, et matrem eius arborem lacrimis lacteis. Quam tamen ficum si comedisset aliquis sanctus, alieno sane, non suo scelere decerptam, misceret visceribus, et anhclaret de illa angelos, immo vero particulas dei, gemendo in oratione atque ructando: quae particulae summi et veri dei ligatae fuissent in illo pomo, nisi electi sancti dente ac ventre solverentur. (Gradually and unconsciously I was led to the absurd trivialities of believing that a fig weeps when it is picked, and that the fig tree its mother sheds milky tears. Yet if some [Manichee] saint ate it, provided that the sin of picking it was done not by his own hand but by another’s [that is: the hand of an Auditor], then he would digest it in his stomach and as a result would breathe out angels, or rather as he groaned in prayer and retched he would bring up bits of God. These bits of the most high and true God would have remained chained in that fruit, if they had not been liberated by the tooth and belly of that elect saint.)

The reasoning elucidated above convinced me that *Conf.* 13.25.38–13.27.42 was one of those sections of the *Confessions* that would have held all kinds of specific connotations for a Manichean reader; that this was in fact an argument against the Manichaean justification of the eating ritual of the Elect, a justification that they based on an interpretation of Paul. In addition, this conviction is strengthened by the existence of a fragmentary Manichaean document, found at Tebessa in 1918.

The Tebessa codex is one of the few surviving Manichaean works in Latin. BeDuhn and Harrison (1997) describe it as an apologetic

¹³ Also in 4.4.8, 5.9.16 and 8.7.17 we have (mostly Augustine’s own) Manichaeism described with the adjective *inimicus* or the noun *inimicitias*.

treatise that defends the existence of the two orders (Elect and Auditors) in the Manichaean Church. More importantly for present purposes: the author of the document (both the title of the work and his name are lost) argues that there are two kinds of spiritual work, appropriate to the Elect and the Auditors respectively and—to quote BeDuhn and Harrison (1997, 35)—“insists on their scriptural, especially Pauline basis”. We thus have proof that the Manichaeans did use Paul’s views on the provision of material support to justify the diverse religious duties of the two orders of the sect and the (related) eating ritual of the Elect that formed an integral part of their daily liturgy. What is more, a certain degree of similarity exists between the Tebessa codex and the passage in *Conf.* 13 under discussion here, both in the “dense texture of allusion” to most of Paul’s letters (BeDuhn and Harrison 1997, 53) and the repeated references to Paul as “the apostle”.¹⁴

It is only when we read *Conf.* 13.25.38–13.27.42 as a direct refutation of claims like those made in the Tebessa codex, that the emotional and polemical tone of the passage falls into place (see quotation below). Augustine implies that the Manichaeans (once again thinking literally) focus on the physical feeding of the Elect and misinterpret Paul to prove their point. His interpretation of Paul’s views on almsgiving with its repetitive references to the importance of the spiritual fruit in those who give alms has these Manichaean arguments as subtext:

neque enim et in illis, qui praebent ista, ea, quae dant, fructus est, sed quo animo dant. itaque ille, qui deo serviebat, non suo ventri, video plane, unde gaudeat, video et congratulor ei valde . . . isti ergo diuturno taedio marcuerant et quasi exaruerant ab isto fructu boni operis, et gaudet eis, quia repullularunt, non sibi, quia eius indigentiae subvenerunt. (But in those who provide the food, the fruit lies not in what they give but in the spirit with which they give it. So I readily see why Paul rejoiced; he served God, not his belly, and I heartily join in his joy . . . the Phillipians had suffered a long period of weariness. They had as it were dried up in producing the fruit of good work. He rejoiced for them that they had revived, not for himself because they came to the help of his wants.)

Unde ergo gaudes, o Paule magne? unde gaudes, unde pasceris . . . quid est, quod te pascit? . . . hinc gaudet, hinc pascitur, quia illi bene fecerunt, non quia eius angustia relaxata est. (What then is the reason for your rejoicing,

¹⁴ See for example BeDuhn and Harrison (1997, 53, 56, 58).

great Paul? What your joy? Where do you find your nourishment? . . . The ground for his joy and for his nourishment is that the Philippians had acted well, not that his trouble was relieved.)

Do I argue for direct textual dependence? This would require a much more in-depth study of the Tebessa codex than I can profess to have done up to now, and the fragmentary state as well as the uncertainty about its provenance may very well rule out this possibility altogether. But I think it is safe to assume that Manichaean justification of their liturgical practice by recourse to Paul would have formed part of an ongoing oral debate and not have been limited to one document—and that Augustine would have had inside information about the issues afoot, both as a Manichaean Auditor and as a Catholic Bishop.

So, in *Conf.* 13.25.38–13.27.42 Augustine, who is very much aware of the literal and physical importance for the Manichaeans of the good works involved in the practice of the Auditors providing the Elect with food, makes it one of his objectives to show that this cannot be deduced from Paul's writings on good works. For Paul, he emphasizes repeatedly, the issue of paramount importance is the spiritual health of the giver and this stands in direct opposition to the meaning the Manichees strive to attach to his words.

Once it is acknowledged that *Conf.* 13.25.38–13.27.42 is designed to address a specific message in a particularly emotional manner to a Manichaean reader, it becomes clear that the Manichaean interest in the preceding and subsequent sections should also be taken more seriously. This means that the whole penultimate section of Augustine's masterpiece strongly targets a potential Manichaean audience. Also, the very closing words of the *Confessions* (echoing a first allusion in the prologue of the work) are based on Matt 7:7, a verse which, according to Augustine, had special meaning for the Manichees.¹⁵ All arguments for seeing this group as a very important section of the intended audience of the *Confessions* must be taken far more seriously than scholarship in general has been willing to concede.

¹⁵ *Mor. eccl.* 17.21.

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PART FOUR

INTERPRETING THE NEW TESTAMENT IN AFRICA

INTERPRETING THE NEW TESTAMENT IN AFRICA: BERNARD LATEGAN ON THE THRESHOLD OF DIVERSE THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSES

Elna Mouton

ABSTRACT

To substantiate the dire need for accountable and credible NT interpretation in Africa at the moment, the essay takes a brief look at two stories—one from a *postmodern* and the other from a *postcolonial* perspective. Both, from related yet distinguishable angles, present elements of the struggle for survival and sense-making on the continent. Both resist and subvert domination by a particular group, person or institution, including the idea of absolute, objective, ahistoric truth. Both offer alternative perspectives, and have serious implications for how people interpret the bible today, for how they speak about God, and for how they respond to socio-economic challenges.

The first story deals with observations regarding a secular (“westernised”) society and *postmodern* thinking as experienced in South Africa at the moment. These trends have potentially constructive yet dangerous consequences for community life in churches and societies. Instead of celebrating the richness of plurality and complementarity, the postmodern attitude for many becomes synonymous with a certain disintegration, with a loss of orientation and cohesion, the loss of memory and destination . . . These tendencies go against the distinctive nature of the church as a life-giving and life-sustaining community.

The second story presents *postcolonial* perspectives from within the *Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians*. Even though women typically form the backbone of core activities in African churches, they still are excluded from decision-making processes and leadership positions in many churches. These seem *inter alia* to be due to (unquestioned) socio-cultural assumptions that influence the functioning of the bible as authoritative text in legitimising women’s “private” or “submissive” roles. The essay briefly explores some of the *Circle’s* responses to the situation.

In conclusion, this “tale of two stories” is related to the life work of South African NT scholar Bernard C. Latagan, who over almost four decades pioneered and nuanced discourses on contextual hermeneutics in (South) Africa and beyond. For him, the

renewed interest in history at the moment (with its focus on *reception* as “sense-making”) led to a rediscovery of context and its role in shaping new forms of theological discourse. This, for Lategan, holds great promise for linking up with the wider theological discourse presently conducted in Africa.

1. *Introduction*

As the experience and interpretation of the early Jesus followers occurred in concrete geographical, socio-economic, political, religious and philosophical contexts, the bible is read analogously in Africa today from within many diverse contexts.¹ To substantiate the dire need for accountable, intelligible and credible NT interpretation at the moment, I briefly refer to two stories from Africa during the past two decades, one from a so-called “postmodern” and the other from a “postcolonial” perspective. Both, from related yet distinguishable angles, present elements of the struggle for survival and sense-making on the continent. Both analyse, evaluate, confront and subvert one-sided, destructive interpretations of human dignity and freedom. Both resist domination by a particular group, person or institution, including the idea of absolute, objective, ahistoric truth. Both offer alternative perspectives, and have serious implications for how people interpret the bible today, for how they speak about God, and for how they respond to socio-economic challenges in Africa.

The radical processes of transformation taking place in South Africa since 1994, with numerous societal shifts, have left no person or institution untouched—including the church and theological education. In spite of significant shifts away from simplistic, one-sided interpretations of the bible, relations among various forms of theology/faith and socio-economic realities in South Africa remain extremely complex (cf. Mouton 2001, 114–117). As far as Reformed theology in general is concerned, “(i)t cannot be denied that, both within the Reformed communities and from the perspective of outsiders, *apartheid* has given the Reformed tradition, and even Christianity itself, a bad

¹ While recognising the bible’s rich and dynamic nature, the effects of its interpretation through the course of history have not always been life-giving and life-affirming. Since human interpretation is such a fragile enterprise, and because of the human inclination to absolutise and abuse authority—including “biblical authority”—I write “bible” and “scripture” in lower case.

reputation in South Africa and has caused a lack of credibility and even self-confidence" (Smit 1999, 4). In the process many people—black people and women in particular—feel *disillusioned* and *deceived* by the many ways in which scripture had been used to justify and solidify racial, gender and other forms of *apartheid* within and among people, even between themselves and God. For such people to be surprised (again) by scripture's liberative and healing power has indeed become an enormous challenge.

Although the present moment in South Africa bears the promise of a new, more accountable hermeneutic awareness, it ironically often seems to *strengthen* the deeply entrenched sense of alienation among and within people. A potentially constructive yet dangerous consequence of a secular ("westernised") society and "postmodern" thinking, for instance, is that they lead to a breakdown of the hegemony of truth claims. Quite often, the emphasis is on *different* rationalities and viewpoints, with little regard for that which binds people together. Instead of celebrating the richness of plurality and complementarity, of sharing one another's stories of joy and pain (what I want to believe postmodern thinking is about), the postmodern attitude for many becomes synonymous with a certain disintegration, with a loss of orientation and cohesion, the loss of a collective moral identity, memory and destination, and consequently, a lack of an ethos of dignity and respect for life, of social responsibility and involvement, with a general attitude of "who cares?". Due to such detached and disinterested attitudes, extreme postmodernist thinking necessarily fails to cultivate a sustainable agenda for transformation.

From a rhetorical perspective, such a profound sense of loss pertains to all three the basic elements of communication (sender-message-receivers), to which Aristotle referred as *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos* (cf. Kennedy 1984, 15–16). In South Africa, many people—including Christians—have lost trust in the *ethos*, integrity, truthfulness, and authority of their leaders, as well as the *logos*, content, authority, and intention of their (spoken and nonverbal) "words", even the truthfulness of the bible itself. Consequently, the *pathos* of their audiences, the rhetorical *effect* of their words and gestures in the lives of people, is often inhibited detrimentally, leading to a sense of *apathy*—particularly among critical thinkers and historically disadvantaged groups. With regards to Christianity, all these requisites for authoritative communication have come under deep suspicion, have lost credibility, and need to be revisited fundamentally. At the heart of

these symptoms, in my view, lies the basic need for an accountable view of both *authority* and *submission*. If authority (including biblical authority) has to be truthful, liberative and healing in order to communicate life, submission likewise has to be free, voluntary, mutual and subversive, according to the example of Christ (Phil 2:5–8).

As far as the church is concerned, the tendencies of disintegration and lack of memory go against its distinctive nature as a life-giving and life-sustaining *community*. They often tragically witness to the reality that Christians have lost their *orientation* and *integration*, their sense of calling, their primary identity as Christians. This is essentially a *theological* (or “spiritual”) problem, which often manifests itself as a “*moral crisis*”, but in actual fact goes much deeper.² In continuation with the dynamic, yet complex, multidimensional nature of the NT documents, it therefore calls for a careful and coherent *theological* response.³ This brings me to a second story from Africa.

2. *Reformed Churches covenanting for justice in Accra*

Recently—from 30 July to 13 August 2004—the *World Alliance of Reformed Churches* (WARC) held its 24th general assembly in Accra, Ghana. Its theme was taken from John 10:10: “That all may have life in fullness”. The meeting was attended by some 400 delegates from over 200 member churches across the globe, and was characterised by warm hospitality, joyful worship, thorough and inclusive decision-making processes, and finally a renewed commitment to justice and peace in the world.

² This is particularly pertinent with respect to the understanding of (sexual) violence and the abuse of power in (South) African societies and churches. There have been significant changes. However, the memory of nearly 2 000 years of a male-dominated church, backed by theology that is derived from mainly western male scholarship has left theology with enormous challenges. Denise Ackermann aptly remarks: “An appalling and too often unacknowledged side of the endemic violence in our society is the sexual violence inflicted on women and children. Even if this fact is acknowledged, it is often not understood that sexual violence is essentially an evil abuse of power. As such, it is a *theological* problem. Racism and sexism are structures of domination which create conditions for the abuse of power” (Ackermann 1994, 205; italics mine).

³ Smit (1999, 11) reiterates this observation: “The most serious reason for concern about the state of Reformed Christianity in South Africa . . . is not the alarming proportions of our moral crisis and our lack of responsibility, but the integrity of our own identity and the credibility of our own life and witness. We face a theological—not primarily a moral—crisis and we need a theological response”. In an

A women's pre-council meeting of three days, focusing on the same topic, was attended by some 300 women and a few men—50% of whom came from African countries. In order to get a glimpse of the glow and pain articulated by the attendants, I quote from the "Final statement of the Women's pre-council meeting" which was presented to the general council on 31 July:

We shared our stories of struggle and hope and listened attentively to the voices of women from all regions of the world. . . . We heard many speak of domestic violence, and of how rape and sexual violence against women and children is being used systematically as a weapon of war and for ethnic cleansing. We heard of the increasing prostitution of women, and of trafficking in women. We heard of environmental racism within and between nations, and of the violence of poverty and the exclusion of millions of women, men and children from the fruits of development. . . . We heard of the wrenching grip of HIV/AIDS over the lives of communities, and that women are often overburdened with the care of the sick and the orphaned. We also heard of the too often silence and hesitance of the churches to address issues of human sexuality and dignity.

We shared our concern about the increase in religiously and ethnically fuelled violence all over the world, and that women and children are primary victims of this. Additionally, legal measures that are in place to control women become even more rigid in times of religious tension. Above all, there is an experience of new (fundamentalistic) religious languages emerging, which are hostile to people of different faiths. . . .

These views reflect but a few perspectives on many (African) women's everyday struggles for survival and meaning. Deeply moved by such stories, the women at the same time utilised the opportunity to encourage one another through worship, preaching, witnessing, dancing, ritual and prayer:

Amidst these threats, we witnessed the deep faith and spirituality of women expressed through their songs, dancing and prayers for justice and peace. We heard of many experiences of solidarity among women across traditional lines of separation, including the efforts of Christian

essay entitled *Scripture as Sacramental Word*, North American theologian John Burgess (1998, 380) refers to recent studies of mainline Protestantism which have suggested that the critical issues are *theological*. He refers to an analysis of the so-called "Presbyterian predicament" by Coalter, Mulder and Weeks, published in 1992, which argued that the renewal of the denomination depends on a recovery of theological vision.

women to work with women of other faiths. Women in many conflict situations are at the center of efforts for peace and reconciliation, such as advocacy for just treatment of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. Many women are also determined to find alternatives to economic globalization by searching for sustainable ways of survival.

Subsequently, the “statement” identified possible *reasons* for the injustices women are exposed to, and which often cause the church “not to be a safe place for women”. These reasons include cultural traditions that define the roles of women in specific ways, and the consequent reluctance to include women in decision-making processes and church leadership. However, the most fundamental issue that calls for urgent attention seems to be the functioning of the bible in ecclesial practice. In their own words:

A fundamental problem for women is *the polarity between the household and public sphere*. Women’s roles have been defined largely (and by *all* African cultures in particular—Isabel Phiri, co-presenter) by their household roles, leading to unequal power, even when secular laws provide for equality. Mission history shows how efforts were made to empower women, yet it is because of this same process that the separation of household and public life was institutionalized in the churches.

Women shared their experiences of how in some churches progress is evident and attempts have been made to widen the leadership of churches by including women in decision-making boards and committees, by intentionally encouraging women to commit to full-time ministry in the church and to receive theological education. However, women also indicated the need for more participation in decision-making, since decisions that exclude women might not always be sensitive to their interests and issues. We are concerned that so many women still speak of experiences of exclusion and abuse in the church. . . . What remains particularly painful is that *the church is often not a safe place for women*. . . .

All of this challenged us to deconstruct some old and reconstruct anew the ways in which we read the Bible. We recognize how important the Bible is for churches in Africa. However, we reminded ourselves of how crucial it is to reread the Bible through women’s eyes *if there is to be gender justice in the church*. Throughout our time together we remembered many women in the Bible and the churches who “left all protocol unobserved” while boldly following Jesus of Nazareth. We read ourselves into those texts, and identified with the desperateness *and* endurance of those women.

Faced with so many threats to “life in fullness”, the 300 women at the pre-council meeting finally called on the churches gathered in Accra:

- to affirm each person's "*right* to live a whole life, to have healthy and affirmative relationships in society, as well as the *challenge* to create and maintain healthy relationships, both within the family and the wider community" (with reference to Dube 2001, 182; italics mine);
- to condemn rape and sexual violence against women and children—particularly as a weapon of war and ethnic cleansing;
- to affirm the process of covenanting for justice in the economy and the earth;
- to accompany women in their efforts to reread the bible with new eyes, and to engender theological education.

3. *The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians*

A significant number of participants from Africa in the women's pre-council meeting, as well as delegates to the General Council of WARC gathered in Accra, were members of *The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians* (hereafter, the *Circle*). In fact, one of the co-presenters of the women's report at the Council was the present coordinator of the *Circle*, Isabel Apawo Phiri, originally from Malawi and currently professor of African Theology in the School of Theology at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, and director of the *Centre for Constructive Theology*. The *Circle* consists of some 400 members who comprise female theologians as well as women from other fields—committed to searching for, and publishing on creative alternatives to *all forms of power abuse and injustice* in African churches and societies, and to gender justice in particular. One of their recent projects is "Engendering Theological Education in Africa", which they consider critical to transformation in churches and societies (cf. Haddad 2003). Since the *Circle's* launch in 1989, its members published more than 30 monographs, as well as many articles in local and international journals. From their efforts originated the *Institute of African Women in Religion and Culture* at Trinity Theological College in Accra, of which Professor Mercy Oduyoye is the (first) director.

For the purpose of this essay, I highlight some trends in the interpretation of the NT by members of the *Circle*.⁴ At a consultation in

⁴ Cf. Ukpong (2001); West (2001) for general trends in the interpretation of the bible in Africa. These and other essays in West, G. O. and M. W. Dube (eds) 2001,

March 1998, the Circle was divided into four research areas, one of which is African biblical and cultural hermeneutics. This project resulted *inter alia* in a seminal work which was co-published by the *Society of Biblical Literature* (SBL) and the *World Council of Churches* (WCC), entitled “Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible” (2001). It was edited by Musa W. Dube, at the time associate professor in Biblical Studies at the University of Botswana, and currently serving as consultant for the WCC with the task of helping theological institutions to integrate HIV/AIDS issues into their programmes. I shall use this book, together with Dube’s monograph *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (2000), as primary resources for my analysis.

4. *Storytelling as an encompassing justice-seeking approach to the NT*

From the outset, the *Circle’s* consultation for African biblical and cultural hermeneutics was challenged with issues of methodology, particularly with respect to the new approach of African feminist readings of the bible. They were to devise alternative ways of reading the bible that would account for African women’s life experiences from within a plurality of religious, socio-cultural, geographical, racial, political and socio-economic contexts, and that would encourage and inform discourses and practices toward radical church renewal and transformation. These ways of reading were to account not only for the continuing authority of (written) biblical texts in those contexts, but also for the authority of other vibrant and authoritative texts in the lives of women, such as (oral) African cultures. All these texts had to be studied and brought into dialogue with each other “for the creation of a just world and the empowerment of women” (Dube 2001b, 1; cf. 1997; 2000, 197–201).

In the process of reviewing the study of African biblical and cultural hermeneutics, the consultation realised that the discipline was *in dire need of many more trained women scholars* if it was to address adequately the need to develop African women’s ways of interpreting

The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends (Leiden/Boston: Brill) form part of a collaborative, ongoing project witnessing to the importance of the bible for Christians in Africa—and *vice versa!*—as well as the many complexities involved in its reception. See also Punt (1998).

both the bible as well as their particular cultural canons. As it is, there are very few academic and literate biblical interpreters on the African continent, given the orality of African societies and its economic status. Due to the patriarchal nature of African societies, women and girls are generally more affected by illiteracy than men are. This is exacerbated by the reality that African patriarchy is often supported by biblical patriarchy (Dube 2001b, 8). The tragic consequence is that there are probably not more than ten female biblical scholars with a doctoral degree in the whole of Africa (Dube 2001b, 12).

The consultation subsequently identified the need to study colonial translations of the bible critically, particularly with reference to ways in which they had disadvantaged women. As a result, the subsection on African biblical and cultural hermeneutics had to be subdivided further into three focal areas, namely:

- African women reading the bible from a storytelling perspective;
- translating the divine: postcolonial feminist readings of the bible; and
- reading with “ordinary” or “grassroots” readers (Dube 2001b, 2).

For the purpose of developing African women’s ways of interpretation, participants showed a preferential option for a *narrative* approach. This approach would however, also include, other methods of reading such as historical and socio-rhetorical interpretations. The consultation realised that the retelling of biblical stories together with African cultural folktales as a form of cultural hermeneutics would “have to be informed by and grounded in critical theories *that seek to avoid all forms of oppression*” (Dube 2001b, 2; emphasis mine; cf. Dube 2000, 3–21, 47–56, 97–124, 197–201; Punt 2003).

Some of the reasons why the consultation regarded storytelling a potentially powerful instrument for rereading the bible and culture toward liberating and healing practices in churches and societies, are the following:

- In African communities, “stories are told and retold repeatedly to depict life, to transmit values, and to give wisdom for survival. The art of telling and retelling stories remains central to African societies” (Dube 2001b, 3). As such, stories provide a consistent resource for the formation of moral identity and ethos;
- Storytelling in Africa, very much like singing and dancing, is largely a participatory and performative activity. Listeners are

- invited to comment and add their interpretations through which fixed stories are opened up for continuous and fresh retelling. As such it is a familiar *genre* to literate as well as illiterate audiences;
- In Africa, storytelling is a *traditional source of theology*. Narrative (as extended metaphor) provides space for alternative visions, perspectives, and values in the struggle for economic, ecological, gender and racial justice (cf. Ackermann et al. 2000; Phiri 1997; Phiri et al. 2002);
 - Various characteristics of African stories make them useful toward developing biblical and cultural hermeneutics that empower women. Many African stories (including proverbs and idiomatic sayings) represent philosophies and strategies of survival. Stories are often gender-neutral and could be used subversively to counteract patriarchal and colonizing interpretations of life. As such they provide a lens for social analysis and critique, as well as *role models for resistance against, and survival amidst* oppressive systems and institutions;
 - Stories hold the potential of *re-imagining, re-telling* and *re-enacting* the experiences of biblical women from the perspectives of later audiences. Biblical narratives are retold and re-imagined through the biographies of women living in patriarchal societies (cf. Abbey 2001). They identify with the point of view of those narratives as if they were insiders in the story. In this way, the dynamic nature of ancient texts may be unlocked in fresh and surprising ways, *even beyond the intentions and capabilities of their patriarchal authors*. No wonder that the NT stories of the Samaritan and Syro-Phoenician women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene have become such powerful elements of those “revised canons”. Another popular example is the personification of “Mama Africa” as a raped and bleeding woman who is invited to rise to life like the daughter of Jairus (Dube 1996a; 1996b; 2000, 127–195; 2001c; 2003). These characters are interpreted as bold women of faith who were prepared to cross cultural barriers because of their faith in Jesus. They embody new ways of existing in a male-dominated world which Jesus opened up for women, reclaiming their worthiness as image-bearers of God (cf. Mouton 2006b);
 - Narratives of women who followed Jesus, as well as parables, provide imaginative bridges leading audiences to judge a situation from new angles. In this way they often serve to *counteract*

unnuanced, ahistorical quotations from scripture to justify the silence and submissiveness of women, such as Paul's injunctions in 1 Corinthians 14:33–40 and 1 Timothy 2:8–15 (cf. Mouton 2006a);

- Storytelling is a female role in many African societies. To retell biblical stories in the light of their own biographies therefore provide women with an opportunity to “reclaim their place as interpreters of social reality and as proponents of their own strategies of resistance and survival” (Dube 2001b, 13);
- From re-telling and re-interpreting biblical narrative *new liturgical expressions are inspired* which hold the potential of internalising values such as hospitality to strangers; inclusive images for God and humanity; the reinterpretation of power in terms of non-violent, caring, and nurturing activities; the celebration of women's gifts and strengths that resist and transform stereotypical views of womanhood such as confusing gentleness and compassion with weakness; healing processes of lament, participation and community-building;
- Stories from within African cultural (and specifically economic) contexts inform *critical questions to other expressions of feminism*, particularly middle class feminist discourse which privileges gender oppression over other forms of oppression such as imperialism, colonialism and poverty (cf. Dube 2000, 23–43, 57–83, 157–195). In this respect African feminist biblical interpreters find strong resonance with African American womanist hermeneutics;
- Narrative, according to its very nature, opens up *rhetorical space* in interpretive activities by allowing for questions pertaining to its function within larger literary units. It specifically asks what such texts were supposed to *do* in the lives of their recipients by their suggestion of a “proposed world” to inhabit, (Ricoeur 1976, 89–95) of new roles to be adopted.

In sum, Dube and others use storytelling as “a feminist theory of analysis and as a method of rewriting the patriarchal silences about women's lives in biblical texts and in African history” (Dube 2001b, 5). In general, the method serves as a “subversive rereading underlining African women's full understanding of their political, economic, and social positions, in both historical and contemporary times, and showing *that they are taking hold of their own destinies*” (Dube 2001b, 6; 2001c). Of crucial importance in this approach, is its consistent emphasis on the *interconnectedness of power issues related to gender, race and*

economy, with particular reference to the biblical justification and authorisation of all these aspects. At the same time, it continuously connects with “non-academic” audiences—an aspect often lacking in western scholarship.

A woman interpreting the NT in Africa is of course not a new phenomenon. Within various church traditions, women form the backbone of core activities such as bible study, catechetical training, and works of compassion. However, because of the socio-culturally determined private and submissive position of most African women—often legitimised by one-sided biblical interpretations—the voices of women had been kept silent for centuries (Phiri 1997, 2000; Kawale 2001a, 2001b).⁵

The emergence of African women’s contextual biblical hermeneutics as a response to this situation, is however relatively new and certainly to be welcomed and encouraged. By placing the presence, contribution, and survival of women in history at the center of the interpretive process (Abbey 2001; Dube 2001c), these women introduce academic and non-academic interpreters of the NT to new understandings of both the biblical texts and present-day contexts. By so doing they invite later audiences to build a world in continuation with NT perspectives that would honour diversity and justice. Through retelling and re-imagining biblical stories from their socio-cultural perspectives, African women do not only find models of power abuse which relate to their own circumstances, but also models of women who creatively use their power to empower others. In the process, *the oppressed boldly and ironically become agents of their own empowerment* (cf. Dube 2003).

To use (mainly western) feminist categories, these responses may be summarised in terms of two significant phases: (1) the development of a hermeneutic of *suspicion* toward literal, ahistoric biblical interpretation, deconstructing patriarchal dominance through storytelling and theory-forming; (2) the development of a hermeneutic of *affirmation* by reconstructing theologies and ecclesial ethos through feminist and postcolonial biblical interpretation characterised by mutuality, partnership and interdependence.

⁵ There have been hopeful changes. According to Wisniewski (1999, 66–76), there were 303 female ordained ministers in Reformed churches in 30 African countries in 1999—Madagascar being at the top of the list with the Democratic Republic of Congo in second place. Of the 30 countries of which statistics were available, five did not have a single female ordained minister.

In a review of the volume *Other Ways of Reading*, Tinyiko S. Maluleke, professor of African Theology at UNISA, acclaims the voices of African women's interpretation of the bible as representing "the cutting edge, the prophetic voice in African theological and biblical scholarship" at the moment (Maluleke 2001). For him, the strongest contribution of this collection lies in its methodological and theoretical proposals. He describes the significance of their contributions to theology as follows (2001, 237–238):

African women's theologies are charting a new way. This theology is mounting a critique of both African culture and African Christianity in ways that previous African theologies have not been able to do . . . There is no doubt that, in the past 20 years, no dimension of Christian theology in Africa has grown in enthusiasm, creativity, and quality like women's theology.

At the start of the new millennium, there is a palpable sense of fatigue in male theology. At one level there is a frivolous search for new metaphors and new labels with very little in-depth engagement with substantial issues of methodology. At another level, African male theology appears to have lost its passion, its compassion, and prophetic urge. African theology is bewildered and confused by the dismantling of *apartheid*, increased globalization, the forceful emergence of issues of gender, ecology, and human rights . . .

Admittedly, some male theologians have been trying to respond theologically to the situation. But many of these responses lack the freshness, enthusiasm, creativity, and sharpness that one senses in the writings of African women. A striking feature of much current and allegedly innovative African male theology is its *inability* to dialogue with and engage the ideas and thoughts of African women. It is a cruel piece of irony that the fountain of creativity—African women's theology—is the place into which tired and frivolous African male theology will not look!

The challenges evoked by Maluleke's critique would obviously apply to *all* participants in theological discourse on the continent—whether black or white, male or female.

5. *Some implications for NT Studies from within postmodern and postcolonial thinking*

Both the complex clusters of "postmodern" and "postcolonial" interpretation in Africa (among many other perspectives) have serious implications for how people read and interpret the NT, for how they speak about God, for how they read and respond to societal and economic challenges in (South) Africa, and to global issues.

How does (and could) NT Studies (in South Africa) respond to this “tale of two stories”—to the present *kairos* of postmodern and postcolonial (feminist) thinking and practices in Africa? What attitudes and actions would match the proportions of such an opportunity, and contribute to lasting solutions? How could NT Studies—in continuation with its dynamic yet complex, multidimensional nature and purpose—mediate and facilitate dialogue among these perspectives while focusing on the discernment of an alternative world, a world characterised by God’s radical yet paradoxical presence in Jesus Christ and the Spirit? On the one hand, the discipline is challenged to recognise secularising, disorienting tendencies in societies and churches that undermine the primary identity of Christian communities and (traditional) community life in Africa, and consistently to redirect any “disinterested”, ahistorical readings of the NT texts. On the other hand, it is challenged to affirm the contribution of Christian spirituality in Africa, characterised by community life as central to all meaning. This is specifically embodied by the *Circle* and its passion for wholeness of life, resisting divisions between “secular” and “sacred”, “spirit” and “body”, the “self” and the “other”, “male” and “female”, “culture” and “nature” . . .

6. *B. C. Lategan on the threshold of diverse theological discourses (in Africa)*

In South Africa, discourses on contextual biblical hermeneutics were pioneered and over a period of almost four decades sustained and nuanced by the innovative contributions of NT scholar Bernard C. Lategan. His prolific work on methodological issues (always carefully argued from within the context of worldwide debates and trends), exegetical and hermeneutical aspects, intertextuality and contextuality, metaphor and reference, reception theories, paradigms in theology, contextual anthropology, imagination and social transformation—to mention but a few—consistently challenged the frameworks of NT interpretation in its creative relations to the rich yet intricate, multidimensional nature and intentions of these documents.

His recent contributions on *historiography* do not only reflect his lifelong commitment to the “ethics” of textual communication, but also to processes of social transformation in South Africa and beyond (cf. Lategan 1970; 1978; 1983; 1984b; 1986a; 1989b; 1990; 1992a; 1994a; 1996; and Smit’s essay in this volume). In Lategan’s thinking,

text and (socio-historical) reality are always sides of the same coin. In this regard, it is especially historical memory as a “sense-making” (community-building, problem-solving) activity that continues to intrigue him. In many respects, his renewed focus on historiography epitomises his integrated approach to life—always imagining new sense-making possibilities of communication. For this purpose, he artfully appropriates the transformative potential of metaphor as rhetorical device, often with reference to Ricoeur (Lategan 1985b; 1994b, 134; 1996, 223–229). According to Ricoeur (1975; 1976, 89–95; 1977, 216–256), the transformative power of a text lies *in its ability to suggest, to open up, to make possible a “world in front of it”, a “proposed world” which readers may adopt or inhabit, an alternative point of view with which they can identify*. In this way, a text discloses a possible new way of looking at things (cf. Lategan 1992b, 154; 1994b, 131–133).

For Lategan, these notions are complemented and strengthened by the development of reader response and reception theories, emphasising the responsibility of readers/receivers in the process of “sense-making”. He employs Iser’s concept of the “implied reader” as a powerful tool in describing the role of readers/audiences in the process of understanding. The implied or textually defined reader, Lategan (1989a, 5, 10) explains, refers to “the anticipated role a potential reader is expected to play in order to actualize the text . . . (It) is a device to engage the real reader by offering a role to be played or an attitude to be assumed”. In this sense metaphor, story, history, and tradition (as extended metaphors) are important lenses, clues, signals or shifting devices by means of which an author can instruct or guide her/his audience toward adopting a preferred position, or inhabiting a new moral world. In helping them to *see* differently, these lenses may help readers to integrate and redescribe their experiences—in so far as they are willing to accept their alternative perspectives. As creative acts of remembrance *and* dismembrance, metaphor and story then become crucial instruments for moral transformation and social change. Remarkable how analogous these notions sound to the transformative potential of narrative as suggested by the *Circle* (Dube 2001b).

Lategan’s renewed attention to historiography therefore affirms his emphasis over decades on the delicate role of *reception* in textual communication—not only as a necessary democratising aspect of the reading process, but *fundamentally* because such ongoing interpretations

are stimulated, facilitated and anticipated by the *historical* and *persuasive* nature and intentions of those documents (Lategan 1982, 48–50). A further bonus of this insight is that “once it became clear that the original tradition was *also* formed in a situation of reception, the conditions in which (contemporary) receptions are produced provided insights *to understand the production of the original tradition better*” (Lategan 1997, 119; emphasis mine). Surprisingly, the spiral movement between God’s Spirit, the texts of the NT and the concrete needs of current audiences is crucial for the *unlocking* of the liberating meaning of those ancient canonised texts.

While exploring aspects of “sense-making”, Lategan also wrestles with the question as to how theology in the South African context could be (re)connected with theology in the rest of Africa. This is typical of his lifelong search for an adequate framework within which to do theology in situations of social change. Consistently, *reception* provides for him a tool for developing such a framework (cf. *inter alia* Lategan 1982; 1984a; 1985a; 1985b; 1986b; 1987; 1988; 1989a; 1991a; 1991b; 1991c; 1992a; 1992b; 1992c; 1993; 1994a; 1994b; 1997; Lategan and Rousseau 1988). In fact, he considers reception as “perhaps the most significant factor when considering future developments in the field of hermeneutics. It lies at the heart of different forms of contextual hermeneutics. . . . Liberation theology, Black theology, Feminist theology, theology of the poor and other marginalised groups, are all variations of the same hermeneutical model and all make use of similar reading strategies. The power of this strategy lies in its discovery of the *interactive* nature of understanding” (Lategan 1997, 117–118; cf. 1984a). Reiterating the interactive nature of communication allows him to explain *why* the emphasis in biblical interpretation had shifted from “sender” (production, authority) to “message” (transmission) to “receiver” (understanding, sense-making):

The change came when the dominant reading no longer made sense, when it no longer opened perspectives for those reading from a powerless or marginalised position. These readers were newcomers, at the end of the chain of reception and in no position to change the dominant tradition. They were expected to be (merely) receivers (and thankful receivers of that)—not producers of the tradition. When their *hermeneutical* powerless position coincided with a powerless social location, the resistance to the dominant reading grew. The latter was experienced as imperialistic and restrictive. Reading from their social location, they were struck by different aspects of the text. Things that remained

hidden for generations suddenly became obvious. The way feminist readers read the biblical text with different eyes and discover different things, is a case in point (1997, 118).

For Lategan, the creative and critical responses of later audiences thus form an integral part of understanding—a necessary “co-determining factor with regard to the form and substance of the message that is subsequently passed on” (1997, 118; cf. Ukpong 2001; West 2001). Such responses are in fact indispensable in order “to continue the tradition and to keep it vibrant and alive” (1997, 119). For him, the renewed interest in history *therefore* holds the promise for linking up with other theological discourses in Africa:

Concentrating on reception led to a rediscovery of the historical-cultural context and its role in shaping new forms of theological discourse. . . . This renewed interest in history is one of the important reasons for the rise of sociological exegesis and especially for a cultural-anthropological approach to interpretation. *This perhaps holds the greatest promise for linking up with the wider theological discourse presently conducted in Africa* (Lategan 1997, 119; emphasis mine).

In summarising his “possible future trends from the perspective of hermeneutics”, Lategan (1997, 120–121) in actual fact affirms the lingering strength of his comprehensive and inclusive approach to both the biblical writings and the process of human understanding:

(I)t would seem that a hermeneutical model which provides for all aspects of the communication process, including that of reception, has distinct advantages when pursuing the goal of inclusive theological dialogue.

Firstly, it is based on an understanding of theological diversity that facilitates, rather than inhibits dialogue. By accepting the plurality of audiences and by approaching the different interpretative communities who form part of the wider African theological discourse as different contexts of reception, it becomes possible to deal with diversity in a more constructive way. Differences in cultural expression and denominational accents can be explored as variations in reception on the one hand, while retaining the centrality of the same tradition that prompts these receptions. This applies equally to the mainstream denomination with their non-African origins and to the various contextual African theological traditions. Reconnecting with Africa and participating in this wider discourse will be a major challenge—and without an inclusive hermeneutical framework it is practically impossible.

Secondly, the proposed framework has the potential to broaden the circle of participants in the envisaged dialogue in a significant way. It does so by recognising the validity and important contribution of hitherto silent or unheard voices. By accepting the constitutive role of the

audience, and also of new audiences, it becomes possible to broaden, correct, and enrich the discourse with the voices of those formerly excluded from the dominant tradition—women, the powerless, the marginalised.

In my view, interpretations of NT texts by the *Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians* offer the kind of imaginative contextual readings implied and anticipated by Lategan's thinking, even though his work was not meant necessarily to engage such specific contexts, and even though his work may not have been (adequately) acknowledged by members of the *Circle*.⁶

7. Preliminary conclusions

It will be a sad day if the hermeneutical framework proposed by Lategan to re-establish links with theology in the rest of Africa, would fall on deaf ears. The same applies to the invitation of African women theologians to African men as well as western women and men to participate in dialogue and the engendering of theological education. Maluleke's warning at the interface of these discourses has the urgency of a *kairos* utterance (2001, 238, emphasis mine):

African women have every right to close ranks and to speak between and among themselves without the interference of menfolk, even African men. For too long, African men—like white males—have assumed the right to speak on behalf of, and to speak *at*, African women. African women will no longer tolerate this situation. As a result, some African men have responded (a) by saying, in various ways, “our women are not like *that*, so it must be ‘foreign influences’ that are causing them to speak and act in this manner”, and (b) by fleeing from dialogue with women by suggesting that, since they are not women, they will not comment on anything to do with gender, feminism, or womanism for fear of being accused of meddling. Both responses are grossly inadequate. The first response is a thin and worn-out excuse, while the other is deception and bigotry of the highest order. This is especially true when African women themselves are calling for dialogue.

It is in such a context—on the fragile threshold among theological discourses (in Africa)—that Bernard Lategan's life and work have to

⁶ See, however, West and Dube (2001, 783) where seven of his publications are listed under the rubric “South African Exegesis”, as part of the volume's extended bibliography on the bible in Africa.

be appreciated. As national and international guilds of NT scholars, our greatest tribute to him at this point in time would probably be to respond with sensitivity and *sense-ibility* to the invitation of that small group of biblical scholars on the African continent who for too long have been silenced because of multifaceted (economic, racial, gender) power structures in theology, churches and societies. Their/our invitation (outcry!) to churches and theology to *accompany them in their efforts to reread the bible with new eyes, and to engender theological education*, cannot be taken for granted.⁷ Together with challenges posed by (one-sided, disorienting) postmodern interpretations, it provides all of us with a unique opportunity firstly to *listen* and to *understand*, and secondly to revisit our calling with respect to the vulnerable liminal spaces among people of diverse paradigms and life experiences on this continent—a socially responsible role which Lategan embraced with courage, wisdom and integrity.

To conclude in his own words while responding to the papers in his honour during the Humboldt-Kolleg in Stellenbosch (12–14 Aug. 2004): “The continuity of our actions with the biblical documents does not lie in *words*, but—with reference to Jüngel—in the quality of our *Verhalten*, our *presence*, our *attitude*.” His colleagues and friends owe this rich legacy first of all to his *Heimat*, the continent of Africa.

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A POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: IDENTITY AND THE OTHERS IN PAUL¹

Jeremy Punt

ABSTRACT

In the Pauline epistles, the insider-outsider contrast accomplished more than to simply distinguish people in terms of opposing groups. A variety of identity-formation processes in early Christianity depended on the notion of the Other, in particular as the early Christian sect defined its boundaries with reference to Judaism. But the insider-outsider binary, at the same time, fed off and contributed to a negative energy, forming the core of an Othering-process, which encouraged stereotyping, vilification and even aggression. Important elements of the insider-outsider contrast in early Christianity are illustrated from the Pauline epistles, and in conclusion, a warning is sounded regarding the contemporary significance of a politics of likeness and difference.

1. *Introduction*

The NT is implicated in the politics of identity, which is hardly surprising given the history of its volatile origins where different religious, ideological and political formations and narratives vied for power and honour. The ideological strategy of stereotyped occlusion of difference in much of the construction of particularly Jewish otherness is at work in various parts of the NT, and is often recognised in the Fourth Gospel in particular. In this writing, even the position of the Nicodemus character, who evades the stereotyped construction of Jewish otherness through his sympathies for Jesus, is a “well-known phenomenon in the sociology of deviance” (Brett 1998, 310–311). But the Pauline documents, for all their emphasis on inclusion (cf. recently Park 2003), are also complicit in strategies of power,

¹ This essay is in appreciation for Bernard Lategan and his work on NT hermeneutics—both continue to inspire!

requiring renewed attention to the issues of identity, association and related matters in the Pauline letters. Indeed, the South African—and global—context demands this, amidst concerns about strategies of identification, related practices of inclusion and exclusion and their oftentimes-debilitating results.

In an age of postcolonial reconstruction we can no longer allow pejorative social stereotyping to pass without critique . . . Whenever the biblical texts—whether Israelite or Christian—have failed to pay respect to the alien, then it is incumbent upon biblical interpreters to deal seriously with this issue and not to let it slip by out of some misplaced loyalty to our various traditions (Brett 1998, 311).

Postcolonial studies around the globe have contributed to the study of identity in contemporary society and draw attention to the ambivalence and hybridity of identity. On the one hand, the “amnesia of colonialism” is highlighted, or in other words, the strong impulse of colonialism to impose a Western sense of identity. The hegemony of Western identity assisted in the systematic erasure or marginalisation of an indigenous (awareness of) identity through the destruction of local culture by the foreign culture² (e.g. Hutcheon 1991, 167–189). However, with a rapidly shrinking world and the plurality of its inhabitants increasingly exposed to one another on the other hand, identity claimed from (and for?) an unadulterated indigenous culture is naïve and impossible. “At a time when vernacular cultures and languages are intermingled with those of the metropolis, it is not always feasible to use dialect as a test of identity” (Sugirtharajah 1999b, 15, 112).³ Moreover, the academy’s recourse to a pure vernacular culture may become either a utopian stance or a manipu-

² At first glance the postcolonial debate in South Africa (in literary circles, specifically) is—not uncharacteristically—driven by the search for national identity, reclaiming precolonial integrity and uprightness, and literary political intervention strategies. Such concerns would burden possible dialogue with poststructuralism and postmodernism, although not ruling out constructive dialogue, and might reclaim postcolonial discourse from its Western captivity, exemplified by its epistemic and cultural imperialism and its use of Western terminology and categories (Carusi 1991, 97).

³ “There is a right wing version of postmodernism in which every identity becomes irreconcilably pitted against every other, and a recognition of ‘otherness’ turns into a doctrinaire refusal to engage with others. A left-wing postmodernism, on the other hand, would suggest that we are always already constituted by traces of others from the past, and respect for others should lead to ethical forms of negotiation which recognise the particularities of social location” (Brett 1998, 313).

lative ploy, both of which serves to secure hermeneutical privilege,⁴ and ultimately amounts to little more than participation in myth making or creative hermeneutical imagination.

When the NT in general and the Pauline letters in particular are approached with such questions and ambiguities in mind, the promotion of a *new identity* accompanied by a new ethos and worldview are often accentuated. The documents are then read as offering the potential reversal of the social location and standing of the Other, the possibility of their becoming part of the Christian family—a brother or sister⁵—underlining that the new identity involved more than a different consciousness. But ambiguity does not stay out, and in apparent glaring contradiction the same documents can also be seen to tolerate, and at times, promote violence, in interplay with various related elements, ranging from the socio-historical to the theological, concerning interests connected to community, ideology, and various other factors.

This contribution considers the problem of outsiders within the broader setting of Paul's politics of difference, or politics of othering. The focus is on the strong oppositional categories invoked to describe people in the NT, and how these contributed to animosity and violent statements. The discussion is framed between initial considerations of first-century identity concerns, and concluding remarks on the enduring influence of a politics of difference.

2. *Identity issues in the first century CE*⁶

Amidst everything else early Christianity achieved, it also provided people with a sense of identity, a claim that is frequently carried

⁴ Not only sanctifying the native, but also identifying him or her as “the site of genuine knowledge” (Rey Chow, in Sugirtharajah 1999b, 16).

⁵ A growing consensus agrees that Paul's letters were not so much about soteriological concerns, doctrinal issues related to justification by faith (as opposed to “works-righteousness”), or the salvation of the Gentiles. The letters are increasingly seen rather to be in service of forging one, unified community consisting of believers from among the Jews and Gentiles (cf. e.g. Dahl 1977, 20; Segal 2000, 188).

⁶ The following discussion on identity is cursory, and focuses on the Jewish context without claiming it as the only area for investigation in this regard. Furthermore, relating the construction of Christian identity in Paul's letters to strategies of inclusion and exclusion, intends no final description of identity à la Paul, disallowed in

over to our day:⁷ “His [Paul’s] constant appeals to the communities are not clever rhetorical tricks; they are his understanding of the deepest urge within us for identity” (Fischer 1996, 66). Given such sentiments, Paul is today probably more often cited for his universal appeal, and for his explicit claim to be all things to all people (e.g. 1 Cor 9:22), regardless of his ability to do this justice. Aside from the possible anomaly of Paul’s simultaneous advocacy of intercultural identity as well as Christian identity, the vital component in both his notion of identity and the identification of difference and the Others is found in his relationship to first-century Judaism. Paul’s sense of intercultural *and* religious identity inevitably brought about interplay between different perspectives on identity, particularly as it concerned boundaries, and even hostility as a result of such divisions.⁸

Typical of the surrounding biblical antiquity, NT texts offer no clearly defined concept of personhood. With the ascription of personhood to angelic beings, demons and the devil, and even the divine, it is clear that the NT authors applied different criteria for what constituted a person, and so went beyond the modern perception of human beings as embodied psyches and therefore persons (Berger 2003, 26–29). Paul’s notions of identity and resulting boundaries are best plotted on the first-century map of identity-concerns, which were influenced by dyadism, or an other-directed orientation (Neyrey 1993, 49–52): people were known and valued in terms of their dyad, the people or elements that defined them. As group-oriented, collectivist people in a non-introspective culture, the in-group provided the means by which people understood themselves and others: “In-group

any case by his hermeneutical style, which was not essentialist and prescriptive but dynamic and participatory (cf. Lategan 1990, 318–328). And this approach avoids a politics of identification, connected to “malestream relations of privilege and orthodox relations of exclusion” (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000, 47).

⁷ E.g.: “It did not destroy mythology; it replaced it with one which was paradoxically both more transcendent and more practical” (Fischer 1996, 68). Whether the Christian myth destroyed those of other cultures where Christianity was established, or was incorporated—with varying effects—into their own myths, is an open question.

⁸ The influence of Pauline sentiments is not restricted to Christian theology, morality and consciousness, but has an enduring presence in the construction of Christian identity. Current Pauline interpretation is also largely defined by identity concerns, including the often-rehearsed debate about Paul’s Jewishness and his relationship to the Torah. Boyarin puts it succinctly: “[Paul’s discourse on the Law and Judaism is] forever caught in a paradox of identity and difference” (Boyarin 1994, 204; cf. Matlock 1998, 450).

members are treated with loyalty, openness, allegiance and support. Those falling outside the in-group boundaries belong to the out-group. With the out-group, dealings are indifferent, even hostile" (Malina and Neyrey 1996, 122). Nevertheless, a deterministic appropriation of such categories has to be avoided, though, since the in-group boundaries were uneven and of differing qualities.

2.1. *Paul amid early first-century CE Jewish identities*

Given the group-oriented, collectivist context, animosity was a constant and hostility a recurring danger in the agonistic first-century Mediterranean societies, exacerbated by changing socio-political configurations which brought about uncertainty and challenged established, traditional notions of identity especially in the urban environments (Perkins 1988, 117–118). Tracing the identity concerns of Paul in this context, the view of F. C. Baur regarding the universality of Christianity versus the exclusivity of Judaism⁹ often still rules. Paul's views were seen as both the result of and contributing to the opposition between the particularist elements and claims of first-century Jewish groups, and the universalistic if smaller "Christian" groups. His shift from Judaism to Christianity was seen as initiated by the Damascus-road events, and thus as a move "from the bodiliness of genealogy to the pure spirituality of faith, from the particularity of 'peoplehood' to the universality of multiculturalism, from the locality of land to the globality of the world" (Volf 1996, 43–50). In his argument, Volf aligns himself with Boyarin,¹⁰ and subscribes to Dunn's thesis that Paul's law-polemic addressed Jewish nationalism and ethnocentrism, believed to exclude Gentiles from a covenantal relationship with God.

Baur's template of Christian universalism versus Jewish particularism has however become untenable, also for explaining the Pauline injunctions against the Law, which was often the basis for identifying the Others. "Numerous recent studies have demonstrated that

⁹ Dunn (1988, 72) claims that Paul saw the *us-over-against-them* attitude as "the heart of the Jewish failure and as a potential danger for Gentile Christians" and that it should therefore not become typical of the eschatological people of God. Cf. also Volf (1996, 43–50).

¹⁰ Boyarin criticises the coercive "universalising" or multicultural transformation of Jewish tradition (1994, 228–260).

key aspects of these pretentious, all-encompassing constructs have no basis in Pauline and other literature, including the Book of Acts,¹¹ which is of questionable validity as a historical source” (Horsley 1995, 1153). The presence of both universalist and particularist sentiments in most religious and other institutions (Park 2003, 3) were common in the first century, as were the ensuing tensions. It is only in late Antiquity that evidence is found for the constructs of *Judaism* and *Christianity* as used since the 19th century.

The interpretation of Pauline thought on identity, community boundaries, and the relationship Jew-Gentile that proceeded largely from Jewish concerns, requires attention for the range of different models that were available for incorporating Gentiles¹² into Jewish tradition¹³ (Segal 1990; 1995, 1–30). Apart from a fully-fledged conversion to Judaism,¹⁴ two other models for Gentile inclusion, those of *resident sojourner*¹⁵ and *Noachide commandments*¹⁶ were available, though

¹¹ “. . . the author of Acts has a theological agenda to present an idealistic picture of the pristine period of early Christianity” (Park 2003, 3).

¹² Paul’s perception and presentation of the mission to Gentiles is increasingly seen against the background of a revisioned Jewish pattern of universalism, rather than of the rejection of Jewish particularism (cf. Donaldson 1994, 166–193).

¹³ Conversion and salvation were different things in first-century Judaism: the former entails the Law, the latter not necessarily as in the case of “righteous Gentiles” (Segal 1995, 5–6; cf. Boyarin 1994, 299–300 n. 1). First-century “Christianity” was related to other Jewish groups in many ways, although probably not a Jewish “sect” such as e.g. Pharisaism (cf. Meeks 1985, 106). Through its internal diversity and notwithstanding Jewish acculturation in the Graeco-Roman world, “in the long run the gentile world was marginal to the religious cosmos of virtually all Jews in antiquity” (Goldenberg 1997, 99–107)—Jewish attitudes to Gentiles and their religious practices were characterised by diversity.

¹⁴ Conversion implied full observance of the Law, including circumcision (cf. also Grabbe 1994, 535–536), and proselytism was impossible in some hard-line Jewish groups where circumcision on the eighth day was required, cf. *Jub.* 15:26–27 (Segal 1995, 10–11). Donaldson suggests that proselytism is the starting point for explaining the Pauline mission and gospel according to the revisioning of Jewish universalism (1994, 193).

¹⁵ Connected to biblical rules related to “the stranger in your gates”, certain Jewish ceremonial and moral regulations were applicable to non-Jews in a majority Jewish community, as expressed e.g. in Lev 17:7–9, 10ff.; 18:6–26; Exod 20:10ff.; 12:18ff. (Segal 1995, 8).

¹⁶ This rabbinic view rests upon the sophisticated, theological claim that certain legal endorsements were given before Sinai to all human beings (Segal 1995, 8–12). Various versions of Noachide commandments existed, with the first proper formulation dating back to the third century CE. However, earlier, pre-Christian versions are found in e.g. *Jubilees* (where they seal the condemnation of Gentiles) and *Sibylline Oracles*, as well as in writings by Pseudo-Phocylides and Aristeas. The commandments included the prohibition of idolatry, promiscuity and violence.

with different purposes and motivations. The social impact was that resident sojourners had to observe some Jewish laws because of their close association with the Israelites, in a social location where Jews are in the majority and have political power. The reference point of the Noachian commandments was the ultimate disposition of Gentiles, presupposing that they were not law-observant, but accommodating them as righteous Gentiles (Segal 1995, 16).¹⁷ While these models are admittedly broad, with blurred borders, they attest to the variety in Jew-Gentile relationships and different notions of identity.

Generalising claims about Diaspora Judaism versus Palestinian Judaism should also be avoided and similarities and differences accounted for in a more cautious way. First-century identity concerns in the Jewish environment were characterised by pluriformity, given the significant diversity in Jewish life in Palestine and in Diaspora during the Hellenistic and Roman period (Bij de Vaate and Van Henten 1996, 27–28).¹⁸ With the pervasive influence of Hellenism¹⁹ also within Palestine, the traditional distinction between Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism as separate entities in themselves (e.g. Davies 1980, 1–16) arouses suspicion (Murray 1982, 196, 201–202). Traditional categories were challenged also by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and continuing investigations of the early Jewish literature, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Apocrypha, Targums, Midrashim and Mishnaic traditions (Howell 1993, 322).²⁰ And more recently the postulated boundaries between Hellenism and Judaism as two different and separate entities were further eroded by the awareness of the

¹⁷ Segal points out that in such situations where the Jews lacked political power, this model avoided a potential “backlash” from the Gentile communities’ accusations against Jews “stealing their children” (1995, 17).

¹⁸ The first century CE knew no authoritative or normative but a *pluriform* Judaism, evident in earlier categories such as rabbinic (or Palestinian), Hellenistic (or diaspora), and apocalyptic (cf. e.g. Howell 1993, 317). Divisions, different groups and sects among the second-Temple Jews were, in part, related to varying perspectives on their scriptures and different interpretations thereof (Charlesworth 1993, 20–43).

¹⁹ In the sense of “the mixed culture that developed in the various parts of the eastern Mediterranean area before, during and after the Hellenistic period proper”, and thus distinct from the Hellenistic period of “political dominance” (cf. Engberg-Pedersen 1995b, xviii n. 5).

²⁰ The supposed differences (even opposition) between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism is questioned in light of recent research (cf. e.g. Lieu, North and Rajak 1992, 1–8; Murray 1982, 194–208); however, Feldman (1986, 83–111) argues for a distinction in the *degree* of Hellenisation between Jewish groups in diaspora and those in Palestine.

inaccurate postulate of a “rationally superior out-going Greek or ‘Western’ culture and the justly submitting ‘Oriental’ cultures conquered by Alexander” (Engberg-Pedersen 1995b, xxiv–xix). In fact, recent research points to the initial isolation of the Greek subjugators in the vanquished lands and the consistent influence of Greek culture in the Mediterranean area long before Alexander’s conquests.²¹

In short, first-century boundary lines between Jewish and non-Jewish identity was probably flexible and even blurred (Bij de Vaate and Van Henten 1996, 28), and Paul’s notion of difference and Others is not adequately captured by a rigid Jew-Christian contrast. In fact, relaxed “border-control” in the first century would have facilitated congenial relationships between Jews and non-Jews, with such interaction probably stimulating progress in mutual acceptance of (Jewish and non-Jewish) *bona fides*. Notwithstanding such developments, the NT and the Pauline letters in particular, suggest continuing efforts on both sides to establish religious and socio-political control by insisting on strict lines of demarcation.

2.2. *Paul and community formation: faith and identity*²²

Paul’s letters betrays an interest in establishing and maintaining identity, and conversely, a strong awareness of those who fall outside the fray, internally and externally—the others—often exemplified by so-called opponents. His concern was to establish a new identity²³ for the communities receiving his correspondence, at times going beyond established social distinctions including those between Jews and Gentiles, evoking a vision of a new society. Identification with Christ was at the center of the new identity promoted by Paul, at times

²¹ Hellenistic culture is a term indicating “the culture that results from mixing *originally* Greek cultural elements with *originally* non-Greek cultural elements. It is *the mixture* (in a given time and place) that constitutes Hellenistic culture proper (in that place)” (Engberg-Pedersen 1995b, xvii–xviii; emphasis in original).

²² Trobisch (1994, 91) argues that in Paul’s editing of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians for the specific purpose of the Jerusalem collection, an important topic was the issue of Christian identity: “for the first time in literary history a Christian theologian defines what it means to be a Christian in contrast to being a Jew”. The appropriateness of the label “Christian theologian” and the contrast “Christian” and “Jew” in this context of theological self-definition, is questionable.

²³ Paul redefines identity since, he argues, when people are left to themselves, and their own devices, they lose their true identity, or personhood (Georgi 1992, 97).

challenging existing notions of identity. "To be 'in Christ' meant for Paul the acceptance of a new consciousness that transcended the social margins of his day" (Kysar 1991, 115). This identification was both theologically and ethically oriented and interacted with two dominant symbols, cross and resurrection²⁴ (Lampe 1995, 931–943), and was variously expressed, not least of which in prepositional phrases with *σύν* or *ἐν*, and Christ. Soteriologically the corporate aspect of both symbols "with" and "in" would provide the invitation to identification while the ethical dimension includes the Pauline emphasis on "interhuman love and upbuilding instead of selfishness" as well as "a patient and joyful enduring of troubles".²⁵ "[T]he early Christian talk about a newly created ego does not *describe*, mirror or represent an already *existing* reality. No, it *creates* this reality of a new ego . . . The entire realm of social relationships is based on words and information that *create* reality (Lampe 1995, 940, emphasis in the original)".²⁶

Paul as a Jew from Pharisaic background was faced with a situation where Gentiles were increasingly becoming the majority in faith communities that included Jewish Christians. Hard-pressed to avoid two classes of Christians, and addressing this issue from his own socio-religious framework, Paul occupies a moderate position and argues that the Gentiles have to be included in the community of the faithful through the model of the Noachian commandments,²⁷ without specific Jewish rules and circumcision in particular (Segal 1995, 20). Theologically Paul argued that all people sinned and are judged by the Law (e.g. Rom 1:18–3:20), and therefore that repentance

²⁴ "The Christian finds identity there [the eschatological act of God in Jesus Christ] rather than in the cosmic reason, and that identity enables and requires participation in the eschatological cause of God" (Verhey 1983, 119).

²⁵ Paul's emphasis in Rom 6 and elsewhere on change in status, assumption of new roles, and recreating identity recalls notions of "rites of passage" or "initiation". For the interplay between baptism and the identity of the followers of Christ, cf. e.g. Engberg-Pedersen (1995a, 502); Kysar (1991, 74): "The society of the church was a single, seamless fabric by virtue of its shared baptism in Christ."

²⁶ Psycho-analytically, the difference between one who imitates and one who identifies with the model person is that the latter not only displays similar behaviour but adopts the model person's motivations, goals and emotions, as well. This requires a "libido impulse" or affection between Christ and believers, and eventually leads to "a radical restructuring of the Ego by identification with Christ", initiated by the ritual identification process of baptism (Lampe 1995, 940).

²⁷ Unlike the "apostolic decree" as presented by Luke (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25), which assumed the model of rules applicable to the sojourner (Segal 1995, 13–20).

and faith are required of all people, Jews and Gentiles. As there are no separate covenants for Jews and Gentiles,²⁸ all should meet the same standard, i.e. transformation by faith in the risen, spiritual Christ. Gentile Christians are therefore to be treated as “righteous Gentiles” not as “resident sojourners”—as equals.²⁹

Paul’s primary concern with the newly formed communities of Christ-followers, and their new identity in Christ, meant a focus on transformation by faith that brings justification, a universal process for Jewish as well as Gentile converts to Christianity—not a critique of works-centered righteousness, an anxiety characteristic of a later time.³⁰ In word and deed, through preaching and evangelising as well as in community practices, Paul’s vision of a new, unified Christian community clearly emerged. The unified community was premised on the removal of *ritual* distinctions between Jew and Gentile in the Christian community.³¹

Paul’s expectations that fellow believers in Christ had to take up a new identity, would prove particularly troublesome to some fellow-Jews, and would contribute to animosity between them and Paul, as

²⁸ As e.g. Gaston (1987), Gager (1983) and, of course, Stendahl argue: for the Jews, on basis of the Law; for Christians on basis of Christ. Cf. recently also Bockmuehl, n. 30 below.

²⁹ Regarding the relation between practicing the Law and the salvation of the Gentiles, Paul’s approach approximates other positions in Judaism. His emphasis on “the centrality of faith, his insistence that all need transformation, and his specific language for flesh and spirit” are, however, different from the positions of other Hellenistic Jewish writers (Segal 1995, 23).

³⁰ Does “fleshly and spiritual observances” amount to the “ceremonial” and “moral” law distinction? Along with Dunn, Segal holds that “works of the Law” denotes the effects of ceremonial laws in the community, but adds that it *refers* to ceremonial laws as such, as well. “Paul is saying that the special laws of Judaism are not relevant for salvation” (Segal 1995, 23–24). The ceremonial Jewish laws are not nullified, but relativised by faith in Christ, are voluntary, and valuable in as far as practicing them contributes to church unity. The supposed “inconsistency” (Sanders) and “incoherency” (Räsänen) of Paul’s statements on the Law can thus be addressed: operating with a Noachian commandments-model, Paul “is willing to accept some of the rules of the sojourner if that will achieve peace and unity within his community of Christians” (Segal 1995, 26–27). Bockmuehl (1995, 100) contends that Paul attempted “to forge a united body of Jewish and Gentile Christians in a fellowship of equals, in which the former continue to live by the special laws and the latter merely by the Noachide laws”.

³¹ In a related way, Paul’s position also provides significant insights into the Jewish position(s) on universalism in the first century (Segal 1995, 27–29). Both Judaism and Christianity, under influence of the Hellenistic period and its dominant cultural forces, argued not just for universalism but also for the toleration of differences within monotheistic religion.

well as Pauline communities. Ambiguously, Pauline initiated communities would attract people from different walks of life, only to be met by Paul's appeals to close ranks around the newly formed communities. While new initiates are welcomed, certain situations led Paul to advise the exclusion of some on the grounds of internal differences. Those who were unwilling to join the Pauline communities were castigated, and vilified, at times in harsh language (cf. Galatians and Philippians). Pauline advocacy regarding a new identity was closely connected to his vision of a new community, and the resultant new identity within such a community.³² The other side of Pauline advocacy was, in a word, animosity directed towards those who either disregarded or rejected the vision of the new identity described by Paul.

3. *Paul, insiders and outsiders*

Given the claims and counter-claims about identity, the voices heard in the NT, including Paul's, cannot be posited as simply and generally exclusive or hostile, as much as sweeping demands for the NT's promotion of inclusivity fail to convince. Amidst such ambiguity stands the insider-outsider mentality in the NT as a complex matter, revolving largely around matters of identity, but influenced by social, political, economic, religious-theological and various other forms and levels of affiliation. Besides those who were defined as outsiders from the outset, there were those who although they at some stage became insiders, for various reasons over the course of time became outsiders again, while others on the outside were invited to join the insiders. The NT shows also how certain lines of demarcation are broken through, if not broken down, but at the same time provides evidence of reinforcing certain divisions. Paul's own position illustrates how he wielded the yardstick for aspirant insiders,

³² Georgi (1991, 52ff.) refers to "the corporate identity of Christ"; cf. Hays (1996, 32–36) for the "fundamental emphasis on community in Paul's thought". Martin (1994, 117–140) questions the supposed individualist character of Hellenism. It is interesting to note how much of the original Pauline emphasis was retained in the Eastern Church, where "the problem of the relation of faith to works has never had such a central position. In the East, Christians regard Paul as a saint, a mystic and a martyr. As to his theology, his *image of the church as the body of Christ* was more important than his doctrine of justification" (Dahl 1977, 20; emphasis added).

and considered specific beliefs and actions as appropriate for belonging to the community and for maintaining community solidarity.³³

The strong sense of identity and continuous efforts to maintain and also elaborate on it necessarily required demarcation as much as identification. Constructing borders between people and us-and-them binaries, was within the first-century, agonistic society not seen as complimentary, as the NT documents attest. The opposites did not attract as in today's cliché, but, to the contrary, led to competition and at times called forth hostilities. Hostility and even violence was natural in the first-century Mediterranean context (Botha 2000, 8–18), since aggression in different forms was common in an agonistic society³⁴ and part of everyday life, the extent to which emerges even from a brief analysis of the NT vocabulary.³⁵

3.1. *Insiders and outsiders, and communities*

Given the volatile and fragile nature of identity in the changing first-century environment, defining communal identity was a precarious undertaking. The difficulties and dangers are evident from an appropriate example to this context, non-retaliation, as a topic appearing often if differently in early Jewish and Christian writings. An important distinction in exhortations on non-retaliation relates to two broadly different contexts, intra-communal conflict and persecution, and external oppression of the community. In the case of the former, the concern is generally with reconciliation and harmony, and with the other, hoping for God's vengeance becomes the motiva-

³³ Segal reckons that Paul saw the terms of commitment and choice more rigidly than many other contemporary Jews; as a recent convert, he considered no middle-positions. "In any event Paul's polarized sense of choices available marks him as a Pharisee . . . Paul retains his preconversion superiority to those who do not keep the law as the Pharisees do" (Segal 2000, 186–187). Cf. Castelli (1991) who finds in Paul's frequent calls for imitation a (warped) discourse of power.

³⁴ The exercise of power meant the ability to exert control over the behaviour of others, and so power was a highly rated *means* value, which facilitated the achievement of core and secondary values (Pilch 1993, 139–143).

³⁵ The vocabulary for violence is varied, including physical human violence, the cosmic struggle between good and evil, and (metaphorically) the Christian's life of service to God as a spiritual battle; however, military terms dominate, indicative of the military environment of the day (Desjardins 1997, 63–64). On the other hand, the failure to address social justice issues, and an emphasis on "peace" that does not allow for resistance against physical oppression, can also be considered violence (Desjardins 1997, 34).

tional argument. With intra-communal conflict, the definition of the community is sometimes more specific than in other instances, where even other friends or neighbours are included.³⁶

Despite the difficulties involved, the identification of self and others was part of being a faith community built around core beliefs, regardless of the community's ability to maintain such beliefs or the level at which these are posed as normative. Such beliefs generally exude and even encourage a certain ethical practice. In the Old Testament, with its strong monotheistic stance and theocratic setting, the people of Israel not only identified themselves accordingly, but also other people in contrast to such claims and ideals.³⁷ This was the case with early Christianity too, with—at times, diverse!—beliefs centring around Jesus Christ, accompanied by the promotion of a strong ethos in the nascent Christian communities. Early Christianity, at times, evidently advanced the notion of inclusivity and claimed the universal impact of Jesus Christ, trimming down on religious ritual and entrance requirements that could have posed barriers for new recruits. At the same time, from an early stage the NT documents also attest to identifying and allocating people into groups, undergirding such practices and their accompanying claims with both religious fervour and argument.

Absolutist claims inevitably lead to rigid categories, and strong boundaries have a way of calling out for their own protection, as well as for the custody of those inside. The NT authors, explicitly or otherwise claimed a particular way to gain God's favour, as described and prescribed by them. Dissent is outlawed, except for inconsequential matters, and compromise is not warranted, especially in a world dominated by the struggle between evil and good forces. The grouping of humanity in camps, necessarily entailed (mutual) exclusion and, depending on control over power and ideology, also marginalisation.

The us-them perspective is found in various contexts in the NT, in all the major corpuses. In the Gospels, it is the strong anti-Judaic

³⁶ Where inter-personal conflict and non-litigious offences are concerned, non-retaliation was seen as forgiveness, love and good deeds aimed at reconciliation. In some texts, reconciliation is restricted by "sharp socio-economic divisions, moral elitism or personal enmities" whereas in other documents, non-retaliation applies regardless, to the extent that some even included Gentiles "in the horizon of application" (Zerbe 1993, 219–294).

³⁷ The accuracy and legitimacy of such claims regarding self as well as regarding the Others is a discussion reserved for another time.

tone that surfaces repeatedly, revealing two strata of the Jesus story. On the one level, it is a relative simple story of Jesus that is primary, but amidst the reinterpretation of the events, which took place after his death, the story about him is told with the communities' concerns in mind. The Fourth Gospel expresses anger against Jews who became the symbol for all who rejected God (John 5:16; 8:57–59; 18:12; 19:10), in a context where the early followers of Christ dreaded the Jewish authorities for fear of exclusion and the might of the Roman Empire to annihilate whole communities for dissent.³⁸ Echoes of the concern with the insiders and outsiders can be heard throughout the Johannine writings,³⁹ and in the Johannine letters, the categories are starkly divided between the saved and the damned.⁴⁰

Other binary opposites are found throughout the NT corpus, often playing on religious or spiritual distinctions and employing symbolic language, such as to be free or enslaved, children of the light or children of the darkness, the faithful or the apostates, those on the narrow or those on the broad way, the wheat or the chaff, the sheep or the goats, the strong or the weak. Suffice it to say that some opposites invoked sentiments that entail going beyond religious categories for explaining the force of the contrast and even the original identity-concerns, and might be related to categories of privilege and marginalisation, wealth and poverty, and other socio-political configurations.

3.2. *Self and other in Paul*

In the Pauline letters, communities are encouraged to develop a sense of belonging, and in this regard familial and affectionate terms (e.g. 1 Thess 2:7–8) are often found, and it is the body metaphor (Rom

³⁸ The Johannine writings provide interesting parallels: the Fourth Gospel begins with a reference—even if negative—to the insiders, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον (John 1:11; “and his own [people] did not receive him”). It sets the tone for the rest of the Gospel.

³⁹ Cf. Pippin about the boundaries of the new covenant group in Rev 21 and 22: “The boundary of the redeemed sets up a system of opposites expressed as insider and outsider, Christian and non-Christian, and fornicators and virgins. There is no room for dissent and no place for women’s power and women’s voices” (Pippin 1992, 55–56).

⁴⁰ Cf. Lieu (1986, 125–165; esp. 145–148) on insiders and outsiders in 2 and 3 John.

12:3–5; 1 Cor 10–12; etc.) in particular which characterises the letters.⁴¹ The baptismal discourse (Gal 3:27–28; 1 Cor 12:12–13; [Col 3:9–11]) underscores the notion that a community of people with the same focus is established through their commitment to Christ. A case can be made for Paul's insistence upon the inclusivity of the reign of God and its earthly manifestations as seen for example in Romans 1:14 and 13:1–14 (Jewett 2000, 62–68). But on the other hand, Paul generally made such inclusiveness dependent on the communities' assent to his visions, understandings and praxis. People in the Pauline community have access to spiritual information and knowledge not available to others.

Insiders are positioned against outsiders, reminding insiders of hostile people who threaten them, and increasing the degree of hostility as can be seen in vice catalogues (e.g. 1 Cor 6:9–11), and the frequent virulent attacks on opponents.⁴² In the NT, the adjectival adverb ἔξω (outside) is used a total of 63 times, six instances of which are substantiated and in five⁴³ of these expressing the notion of the outsiders, those outside the community or the people not part of the in-group, the others. Probably not without significance, the substantiated use of the adverb ἔξω occurs with one exception (Mark 4:11), only in the Pauline tradition (1 Cor 5:12, 13; 1 Thess 4:12; [Col 4:5]).

In the Pauline documents, the adjective ἕτερος (“other”) besides contrasting different categories (Rom 7:3, 4; 1 Cor 3:4; 12:9, 10; 14:17; 15:40), was used to describe a number of different issues: other commandment (Rom 13:9); other law (Rom 7:23); other spirit, other gospel (2 Cor 11:4); other gospel (Gal 1:6); and other (of the) apostle(s) (Gal 1:19). It was used to refer to any other entity (Rom 8:39), but often also to refer to other people. Another person, in the sense of someone on the inside, a fellow member of the community (Rom 2:1, 2:21; 1 Cor 4:6, 6:1, 10:24, 29; Gal 6:4) was mostly in mind, but at times and in broader sense, another person (Rom 13:8; 1 Cor 14:21; 2 Cor 8:8).

⁴¹ In the subsequent Pauline tradition, e.g. Colossians and Ephesians, the body metaphor is altered with Christ now portrayed as the head of the body, while Christians make up the rest of the body (Col 1:18; Eph 1:22; 4:15).

⁴² At times conflicts provide the context and requirement to define identity, e.g. Paul in Galatia (cf. Taylor 2003, 915–945).

⁴³ In the other instance, ὁ ἔξω refers to corporeality, the external or outer side of being human, and as opposed to the inner being, ὁ ἔσω (2 Cor 4:16).

In letters such as Galatians and Philippians it becomes only too clear how what started out as inclusivity turns into sharp exclusion, when those threatening the fibre of the community or the veracity of Paul's expressed convictions and commitments are vilified and marginalised. Those who rejected the Christian message fell into a different category of human beings, and were accused of the vilest acts.⁴⁴ To claim that Paul eschewed any particular ethnic identity⁴⁵ in favour of an all-inclusive community of the Lord, fails to deal with the evidence which suggests that the cause for exclusion is often not ethnic identity as such, but rather the position people assumed.⁴⁶

As found in most other NT writings, moderating features are present amid Paul's politics of othering. In his letters, the boundary line is generally not fixed, since the missionary drive allowed for the outsider to be seen as a potential insider. Pauline attempts to break through some insider-outsider, us-them moulds are found in familiar texts such as the baptismal formula in Gal 3:28 and elsewhere. Calls for inclusivity, for tolerance and respect for difference are found in Rom 12:3–8 (esp. 4–5); 1:14 (cf. also Jewett 2000, 62–65); 15:7–13 (cf. also Jewett 2000, 69–71). A niggling question is whether such calls are limited to the intra-communal situation, restricted to the different groups or factions inside the early Christian church. And although as a rule, the NT does not portray Christians with a violent disposition towards outsiders, exceptions to the rule do appear. In the end, a basic problem persists, at least for the modern reader, and this is the lack of respect for another person's right to exist and be different in that existence.

⁴⁴ In the later New Testament traditions, the intensity of the animosity increases, as illustrated well by the accusations levelled against the "ungodly" one of Jude (Jude 4, 15, 18).

⁴⁵ "[S]ometimes Paul's opponents must be Christians as well as, presumably, Jews. I would include in that category gentile Christians who had already been circumcised, making them Jews for all intents and purposes" (Segal 2000, 186).

⁴⁶ The claims that "Paul's mission implies an alternative vision of the path toward global reconciliation. It runs neither through Roman propaganda and imperial rule nor through conversion to a single ethnic identity or theological orientation", and "Since God's grace is equally available to all, no claim of superiority remains valid and therewith the basis for every kind of imperialism has been removed" (Jewett 2000, 71), may be accurate on one level, but does not address the broader picture, where the Pauline notion of identity ruled the day.

4. *Paul's politics of difference and othering*

The NT is clearly imbued with the language of identification, with images, processes and structures of claiming and disavowing identity, tracing insiders and allocating status, pointing to outsiders and marginalising them or appealing for their marginalisation. These faith communities of the first century rarely indulged the concern for diversity, flexibility and being open-ended, at least not in its postmodern, 21st century format.⁴⁷ In fact, a politics of difference held sway,⁴⁸ characterised by a perceived link between identity and social location, as well as the harmful effects of not—or inappropriately—recognising identity (cf. Volf 1996, 18ff.). In an imperialist context of oppression and want such as the first-century Mediterranean world, often accompanied by dispossession and persecution, communities of faith were ready to identify the foreigner and especially the opponent!

Claims regarding the identity and status of the self and others vis-à-vis the community were expressed in numerous ways, according to the style of the particular NT author, the issue at hand, the nature of the community, relevant to the message conveyed, and so on. There was no one particular, agreed-upon way of expressing notions of belonging and dissociation, rendering for example the Pauline sibling language, the Johannine letters emphasis of “my (little) children”, and various others. Tracing words or phrases (such as ἀδελφοί or uses of ἰδιος) through the NT is limiting, and is bound to render incomplete and possibly skewed pictures. In fact, since words and phrases—and their particular usage—are reflective and representative of one tradition, the contributions of other NT traditions are then often marginalised or even excluded.

A strong focus on postulating and describing, establishing and maintaining identity required the construction rather than abolishment of perimeters and borders. The purpose of borders was to provide a social location for the insiders, as much as it was to fend off

⁴⁷ Even today, the notion of human diversity as a “great resource, which is underpinned . . . by universal cultural values that must be passed on from the cradle to the grave” (Mayor 1997, 2), often remains idealist.

⁴⁸ Not restricting the contrast to modern times (so Volf 1996, 18, quoting Taylor), the difference between a “politics of equal identity” and a “politics of difference (or identity)” is helpful for understanding the tensions Paul experienced and helped create.

outsiders whether or not they challenged the insiders and their sense of identity. Keeping the outsiders at bay even to the extent of their elimination is considered vital in an intentional community, especially in its early days of formulating a new, or at least different, sense of identity.

4.1. *The dynamics of a politics of othering*

A politics and rhetoric of othering deals with ideological justification, and can in its more well-known forms be traced back to the “classic undemocratic discourses” of Plato and Aristotle, even if they were later refined and continued by the post-Enlightenment philosophers such as Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau and Hegel.⁴⁹ The Greek *polis* of times before the NT already reflects the patterns of identification and domination, marginalisation and exclusion.⁵⁰ In its patriarchal context, the city-state embodied political-philosophical values in accordance with an andro-social understanding of democracy. Political and social power was the province of elite, propertied men, excluding not only slave men and women, but also free-born propertied women, poor men and women, and of course, barbarian (i.e. not Greek) men and women. For such socio-political arrangements, at odds with Sophist belief that all people are equal by nature, ideological justification was found in the articulation of dualisms⁵¹ and the notions of natural superiority and inferiority of some people.⁵² The politics of othering does not intend to describe the generic person, but generalises the imperial standard as the universal subject (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000, 46), a practice which has through the centuries become the norm in hegemonic and colonialist discourse.

⁴⁹ “Not just religious studies but all modern theories of political and moral life are shot through with the politics of othering, that is, with ideologies of sexism, colonialism and racism, the systems and discourses of marginalization, vilification, and dehumanization” (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000, 45).

⁵⁰ E.g. the distinction between the public and private realms of life, leaves the civic public inhabited by an “impartial and universal point of view of normative reason”, and the private with its emphasis on the family seen as the domain of women, and thus of “the body, affectivity and desire” (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000, 45). Cf. Meeks (1986, 19–39).

⁵¹ Such as human-animal, male-female, slave-free, native-alien (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000, 46).

⁵² It was predominantly about the assertion of the inferiority of slaves and (free-born) women as the targets of the ideological constructs on the inferiority of these groups, and the concomitant need to treat them accordingly.

Once the hierarchy is established and legitimated, mechanisms of control are put in place within systems of domination and subordination, and an authenticating discourse is adopted to obscure these practices by claiming them as natural (or divinely) ordained.⁵³ These are the dynamics of a politics of othering.

4.2. *Othering in the Pauline texts: the opponents*

The politics and rhetorics of othering found in the Pauline discourse is primarily situated in the two particular ways of establishing and treating counter-identity: assimilating the differences of the other to the same (but, of course, as an inferior version), and vilifying and idealising difference as otherness (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000, 45ff.). Claims to identity and exclusion from identity, and resulting structures of domination and subordination are substantiated through an appeal to naturalised differences, as embodied in a perceived or even revealed *natural* order. Only through recognising such appeals to be part of a historical political process rather than absolutist revelation or universal, transcultural natural order, can the process of dismantling a politics of othering begin.

A politics of othering is predominantly a rhetoric of legitimisation, constructing a discourse replete with cause, development and effect, by means of which certain people or groups of people are identified *contra* the selves or insider-group, and are thus considered as deserving of exclusion, marginalisation, vilification and at times brutalisation. The strongest invectives originating from his politics of othering, is possibly reserved for Paul's strongly worded opposition to the opponents in Galatians and Philippians in particular. Such politics of othering is, however, not reserved for opponents only, whether inside or outside the Pauline communities, but also includes strategies of marginalisation and silencing, where variously defined groups in and outside these communities are the targets of the Pauline controls.

A prominent strategy on Paul's side is the gendering of his discourse, often claiming himself as the *father* of the communities, and the one who will present the community as *bride* to her husband (e.g. 2 Cor 11:2–3). The negative overtones in gendering the

⁵³ Dorothy Smith called these "relationships of ruling" (cited in Schüssler Fiorenza 2000, 46).

community relate to the narrative of the seduction of Eve. Such a symbolic construct of gender dualism at once coheres in and undermines the other dualistic oppositions insofar as it casts all speaking subjects (Paul, the opponents, contemporary interpreters, and so on) as masculine and construe their audience (the Corinthian community, Judaism, or contemporary readers, etc.) in feminine terms as passive, immature, and gullible (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000, 47).

4.3. *The history of Pauline interpretation*

Both the canonical texts and the history of their interpretation⁵⁴ are implicated in the Pauline politics of othering. “This Western ‘politics of identity’ and ‘rhetorics of othering’ establishes identity either by comparison to the other as an inferior ‘same’ or by emphasizing and stereotyping difference as the otherness of the other” (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000, 46). These differences are taken by the powerful as legitimate warrant to control and rule, and they portray the differences to the powerless as either natural or divinely ordained sanction for submissiveness and subordination. Theological as well as sociological angles on the disputes recalled in his letters accord Paul’s voice pride of place, dismissing the positions of the opponents of Paul either as heretical challenges to orthodoxy, or as sectarian deviance (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000, 46–47).

The nature of discourse complete with its many binaries in Paul’s letters is too often constructed as a series of dualistic religious, cultural and political discords such as “orthodoxy-heresy, apostle-community, honour-shame, mission-propaganda, and theology of the cross-libertine enthusiasm”, whereas they amount to no more than “theological arguments over meaning and interpretation”. In the end, the first elements of such binaries are privileged, claiming them for Paul, the early Christian church or even for Christianity today. “Such interpretive dualistic oppositions muddle and play down the linking and connecting terms such as ‘audience, community, gospel’ by subsuming them under either pole of the opposition rather than seeing

⁵⁴ Pauline interpretation is faulted for two illegitimate processes of identification in particular, leading to a hegemonic politics of interpretation: “malestream” interpreters identifying themselves with (the letters of) Paul, and further assuming Paul to be identical with the communities he addressed (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000, 44).

them as a possibility for overcoming the argumentative dualism constructed by Paul” (Schüssler Fiorenza 2000, 47).

4.4. *Remaining ambiguities*

The need for further sustained investigation of Pauline rhetorics and politics of meaning is evident. At the same time, not to valorise and re-inscribe a (Pauline) rhetoric and politics of othering is an abiding concern. This requires biblical interpreters to avoid a hermeneutics of identification with Paul as a “master-voice” in the NT, through an investigation of the politics of meaning in contemporary interpretation and by formulating an appropriate ethics of interpretation!

The ambiguity of insider-outsider rhetoric in Paul is not collapsed by Schüssler Fiorenza’s comments about Paul’s use of a politics of othering as imperialist device, even if her comments are probably more appropriate for describing the history and legacy of Pauline interpretation, than the letters themselves. How is it decided, for example, whether the hegemonic claims attributed to Paul cannot more readily be ascribed to his opponents, who often apparently operated in service of the imperial or religious center against the Pauline groups who at the time were found on the periphery rather than in the center? (cf. Jewett 2000, 60) On a different level, is the decision about whether Paul might be interpreted as having positively or negatively contributed towards an equitable socio-political environment, given his social and temporal location, ultimately a discussion about Pauline motives, or about our contemporary political concerns?

Is it fair, and accurate to slam attempts to “understand” Pauline calls for submissiveness, as nothing less than acquiescing to domination, to claim that such attempts only make them (more) palatable and therefore acceptable? Is it an ethical reading to transpose the political sensitivities of today—a longing for egalitarian communities with democratic participation—onto Pauline texts, effectively exercising hegemonic control from a position of hermeneutical privilege based on political correctness?⁵⁵ In short, is the ambiguity of

⁵⁵ E.g., Schüssler Fiorenza (2000, 48–53) argues against Horsley’s reading of 1 Corinthians as a challenge to the social values and dominant relations of the Graeco-Roman Empire, claiming that the self-understanding of the *ekklesia* is rather to be

the Pauline texts dealt with accurately and responsibly when stark and limiting categories are employed by which all interpretation of Paul's letters are vanquished which does not render either a liberation-focussed Paul or *ekklēsia*, or a contra-Paul reading?

5. *Conclusion: othering*

The prime concern for the interpreter must be to facilitate communal harmony rather than to resuscitate a projected, invented or imagined hypothetical identity or a past entombed in a bygone era (Sugirtharajah 1999a, 111).

Paul's anger, in Galatians but also elsewhere, is not so much directed at the opponents or not as harshly as towards the erstwhile faithful, the new converts who have departed from the way of the community (cf. Johnson 1986, 304, 307). It appears that the danger of "otherness within" was at times a greater cause for concern than the threat from (those) outside the community. The enemy within, the dissenters found inside the own religious tradition, are very often the first to come face to face with religious violence, in a context where guilt can play an instructive role ("they deserved what they got"; "they were looking for it"; etc.). As the history of the inquisition and other more recent religious-based programs have shown, "belief in one's own absolute religious truth leads to intolerance and dissonance which calls forth violent means to destroy religious dissent" (Selengut 2003, 84).

The existence of powerful social structures in the (post)modern world challenges established identities, also those that are religious in nature.⁵⁶ "Globalisation carries with it a danger of uniformity and increases the temptation to turn inwards and take refuge in all kinds

privileged. She similarly challenges Elliott's account of Rom 13 and the apparent advocacy of voluntary subordination as the lesser of two evils—the other being political annihilation!—questioning both the *accuracy* of Paul's representation of the historical contexts or the rhetorical situations, as well as the *adequacy* of his "theo-ethical" responses.

⁵⁶ However, Tolbert (1995, 305ff.) argues cogently that a politics of location best replaces a politics of identity in our postmodern times, arguing for a "fluid, shifting, and generally context-dependent" view of identity. Rather than some essential category, identity depends on location, which again is determined by "facts of blood" (social, personal and familial alignments) and "facts of bread" (national, economic and political matters)—elements which are often at violent odds with one another.

of convictions—religious, ideological, cultural, or nationalistic” (Mayor 1997, 2). The interesting paradox inherent to *globalisation* is that as much as it challenges and changes existing inherited particularist cultures and identities, it also contributes to the invention and reinforcing of some cultures and identities as a measure of establishing control over systemic power.⁵⁷ Amidst the real or perceived threat which globalisation poses to local identities, religion can often become the last sanctuary within which a particular identity is fostered.⁵⁸ Such religiously justified consciousness often proves more recalcitrant to accepting change and adjustments, and can even lead to societal conflict when the actions and aims of such communities clash with those of broader society.

Today an ecclesio-centric theology still creates problems in relating to religious pluralism—the saved community against the unsaved world (Ariarajah 1985, 69)—and, depending on the boundaries of the *ekklēsia*, potentially also among different faith communities.⁵⁹ The problem is foremost however with identity (definition) and community (consciousness; boundaries). Marginalised groups can claim their detrimental status as both an indication of their special status before God, and as a warrant for venting anger and violence on their opponents and rest of society in general. Such groups who feel exposed, ignored, abandoned and humiliated, having to deal with frustrated expectations are fertile feeding grounds for dissent, anger and violence (Selengut 2003, 85).⁶⁰ Assuming a special status with God, they believe they are endowed with unique rights to punish their

⁵⁷ Cf. Povinelli (1998, 574ff.) on the abuse of multiculturalism in order to maintain a new form of monoculturalism; Asad (1993, esp. 266) on the contribution of multiculturalism in Britain to “the reinforcement of centralized state power and the aestheticization of moral identities”; and Žižek (1997, 29–51) seeing multiculturalism as an excuse for imposing capitalism.

⁵⁸ “Various kinds of cultural ‘cleansings’ demand of us to place identity and otherness at the center of theological reflection on social realities” (Volf 1996, 17; emphasis in original).

⁵⁹ The danger is always there that the insider-outsider rhetoric will mutate into the call for holy war, “the earliest and most elemental expression of religious violence” (Selengut 2003, 17).

⁶⁰ *Multiculturalism* often equals tension and conflict, especially where “identity with itself” is found as is the case with the identity of modern Europe with its history of colonisation, oppression and destruction of cultures and imposition of its religion “all in the name of its identity with itself” (Volf 1996). This resulted in a totalising, absolutising self-identity, therefore exclusivist and oppressive, and often violent towards the other.

victimisers and perpetrators to gain their rightful place in society and undo their position as persecuted and stigmatised community.⁶¹

Animosity and even conflict is generated by the insider-outsider mentality. A particular threat is the discovery of otherness within, especially in the Christian tradition that is for a large part a scriptural community,⁶² with the Bible as its foundational document (Green 1985, 49-69). Otherness in Christianity is often expressed in “biblical” terms, and the Bible and its interpretation is still found useful for identifying the Others and for legitimating violence against them.⁶³ It is therefore important to account for the insider-outsider rhetoric found in the NT and the potential of such rhetoric to stimulate animosity.

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⁶¹ The link between Scripture and the sense of identity, or “enscripturalised identity”, entails self-definition but also the identification of the other through the interpretation and appropriation of the biblical texts. Identities of the self and other are, among others, also textually enscribed. The relation between hermeneutical processes of identity and othering, and social identity and othering is worth noting, especially against the background of a pragmatist or interpersonal reading perspective: hermeneutical and social “otherness” is interrelated. Cf. Punt (2002).

⁶² Unlike a textual community with its focus on written texts, a *scriptural community* shifts the emphasis to Scripture, which is often, but not exclusively, inscribed textually: the textual aspect is incidental to the scriptural, i.e. the foundational tradition. What distinguishes a textual community from an aural/oral community is a worldview shift, whereby texts become privileged sites of fact and authority; textuality is a new topology” (Green 1985, 56). Cf. Punt (1999).

⁶³ Scriptural communities, like textual communities are fragile, in the sense that the “ultimacy, primacy, and constitutive character” of the community’s sense of Scripture can be corrupted or diminished. “The most threatening kind of otherness, [is] the otherness within” (Green 1985, 69), also for scriptural communities.

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SELECTED 19TH CENTURY SESOTHO READINGS OF THE BIBLE: DAVID MOILOA AND THE DAYS OF BASOTHO'S IGNORANCE¹

Maarman Samuel Tshehla

ABSTRACT

In the pages of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society newspaper, *Leselinyana la Lesotho*, the earliest generations of literate Basotho found not only a source of political and spiritual guidance, but also a medium whereby they too could express their views even if within that missionary setting. The present paper desires to “hear” some of the issues raised by these Basotho in order, chiefly, to see how they brought the Bible to bear on those issues. Whereas expatriate missionary voices have overwhelmingly informed South African 19th century mission historiography thus far, this paper hopes to show how much the academy stands to gain by pausing to listen to what the native interlocutors of these “missionaries” had to say in their own ways and words. David Moiloa is one such interlocutor who ably illustrates some of the issues as well as the ingenious manner of reading and writing that 19th century Basotho engaged in.

1. *Personal motivation*

Half of my ten siblings, two female and three male, alongside their spouses, are ministers in charge of congregations in various parts of the four provinces that formerly constituted the Transvaal. My father, Marupeng Elias Tshehla, was a retired minister of *The Bantu Members Church of South Africa*, an apostolic-Zionist African Instituted Church.

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My maternal grandfather, Maarman Samuel Tau, was quite a respected minister of the Gospel in Sekhukhuneland in his time. This involvement in ministry extends to the so-called extended family but I trust the point is clear that I am intimately related to men and women for whom Christianity is a way of life. Because my grandfather and my father are both deceased, I am unlikely to hear them preach on this side of the grave.

Moreover, since they were not men of letters, I equally have no records of the sermons and exhortations they gave over the years of their respective ministries. (My siblings are much more literate and their exploits in the propagation of Christianity in southern Africa will be recorded and duly explored in due course, although the *North American Charismatic Movement's* stamp renders them hardly original in some critical regards.) But I have come to find in places such as *Leselinyana*² my ancestors' contemporaries' sentiments regarding various pertinent subjects. The older African ministers of the Gospel, particularly those who ministered in their own mother tongues, seem to hold a lot more promise for those people who desire, like me, to have some connection with their African forebears in the faith. It is needless to say that in my case these are the Basotho whose accession to and active participation in Christianity commenced in the 19th century.

2. African missionaries' legacy

Although the *Leselinyana* entries intimate that there were literate native ministers of the Gospel in southern Africa from as early as the middle of the 19th century, we realize that there were many others alongside them who were not lettered. Indeed both my father and grandfather are examples, the former having had only one year of primary schooling. To be sure they prefer to "read" the Bible for themselves as much as possible, but they could only sign documents by means of that puzzling symbol of self-representation, X. On the

² *Leselinyana la Lesotho* translates into *The Little Light of Lesotho*, and is henceforth fondly abbreviated *Leselinyana*. A miniature Morija Printing Press was introduced in 1861 and the *Morija Book Depot* inaugurated in 1862. *Leselinyana* was published from this facility as of 1863 (see Mangoela 1963).

other hand, their literate Basotho contemporaries that I interact with in my work were given to reading, writing, and even teaching others to do the same for themselves. Nevertheless, literate or not, we are dealing here with persons who in their respective generations took the Gospel to areas it had not yet reached.

In the process of transferring the Gospel to fresh contexts, they were compelled to give thought to their message to extents that the mission stations could hardly have prepared them for. It seems logical, in retrospect at least, that Africans were better placed to reach the deepest recesses of fellow-Africans' souls far more than the expatriate missionaries could. In the process, the Gospel was truly translated into African idiom and really clothed in African garb, within certain parameters of course, since we all are children of our times. Be that as it may, it is certainly a privilege that we have, in the Sesotho connection, access to first-hand accounts of these pioneer fieldworkers' sentiments.

There remains little doubt, if any at all, among modern scholars about the role that local evangelists (a.k.a. "catechists") played in the concrete spread of Christianity in Africa.³ For Lamin Sanneh for instance, as appropriately summed up by one stern critic, this development was a matter of course:

It was and could only be Africans who translated the gospel onto vernacular idiom and not the missionaries, he argues. Furthermore, Sanneh argues that Africans conducted and discharged the translation process in such a way as to strengthen their own identity and position in the world. (Maluleke 2000, 32)

While many have competently analysed the expatriate missionaries' obliging writings as well as their ambivalent role in the "colonization-civilization" of African societies, remarkably far fewer scholars have taken the time to study the first-hand accounts of Africa's native missionaries from the same era. (It must be apparent by now that

³ "The spread of Christianity owed more to the zeal of African converts than to the direct actions of missionaries, whose importance seems to have been more political and cultural than evangelistic" (Elphick and Davenport 1997, 4). *Leselinyana la Lesotho* is replete with references to Basotho missionaries (*baboleli*, i.e. catechists) working in such far-off areas as *Bopeli* (present-day Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces of RSA) or in Zimbabwe for instance, (see case in point in footnote 11: *The arrival of Lesotho Church Messengers at Bonyai*). In his doctoral dissertation, Tinyiko Maluleke (1995, 6–21) also duly acknowledges the work of these Basotho missionaries among the Tsonga in the eastern parts of the then Transvaal Republic.

the term “missionary” does not exclusively denote, in my employment, expatriate evangelists.) Most of the few noble attempts that seek to privilege African voices tend to take as binding starting points the expatriate interlocutors’ accounts, which they then endeavour to read against the grain.⁴

Nevertheless a decade ago Tinyiko Maluleke urged the South African theological academe to undergo a paradigm shift, one that I must sadly admit is still a long way from being realized as at the present time.

In putting indigenous vernacular literature forward as a valuable and viable source of missiology, I must not be understood to be merely offering an “addition” to the available repertoire of missiological approaches. The very suggestion that indigenous vernacular literature is a valid source of missiology is both ideological and “subversive”. It is not as if vernacular literature exists, albeit in some untapped form, unproblematically side by side with well-established sources of missiology. In that case, the task at hand would simply be to *supplement* and *complement* the well-established sources accordingly. My proposal carries, at least two cardinal implications, namely: (a) for a local missiology of liberation, indigenous vernacular literature features at the level of a primary source, and (b) the dominant and established Western sources of missiology must be subjected to interrogation by indigenous vernacular literature rather than vice versa, as it is “normally” the case. (Maluleke 1995, 2)

Accordingly, to urge attention on indigenous vernacular literature is not tantamount, among other things, to a blind acceptance of writings by Africans. On the contrary, it is a call to just as critical a poise as is required when reading expatriate missionaries or colonists’ accounts. The present paper attempts to demonstrate the above claims while taking seriously as primary sources in their own right the

⁴ While we enjoy access to the writings of 19th century Basotho, it remains baffling even if symptomatic of our time, that Sybil De Clark’s recent UNISA PhD thesis means to “focus on the evolution of Sotho perception and understanding of Christian notions, as well as on Sotho attitudes towards the missionaries’ Christianity” (2000, i), yet this work relies entirely on PEMS emissaries’ accounts for these *Sotho perceptions and attitudes*. “Missionary accounts”, she intimates, are “the most direct evidence of these Basotho’s perceptions, and as such they constitute invaluable data which should be taken seriously” (2000, 16). Five years earlier, Tinyiko Maluleke’s doctoral dissertation at the same university urged and demonstrated that indigenous vernacular literature “constitutes a fertile and valid source of missiology, in the same way that missionary archives, memoirs, biographies, theological and ethnographical works have been thus far considered” (1995, 1); cf. Tshehla 2004.

African interlocutors' records. The Africans in question here are King Moshoeshoe's subjects, among whom the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) emissaries began work in 1833. The PEMS background and exploits are abundantly recorded and so require no elucidation at this stage. However, before engaging Moiloa and other Basotho writers of the 19th century, I must introduce the policies whereby *Leselinyana* was run.

3. *The editorial policy*

Leselinyana la Lesotho emerged to be one of the most distinguished upshots of PEMS work among Basotho. Originally intended for the instruction of the Basotho in matters of Christianity and other momentous world events and phenomena, *Leselinyana* also became the channel whereby Basotho could express their views. That is to say the Basotho were readers of, as much as they grew to be writers for, *Leselinyana*. And yet, far from suggesting that their submissions to *Leselinyana* were invulnerable to censorship, we in fact acknowledge that our expatriate missionary-editors exercised significant control over these African writers and/or their writings.⁵

For instance the editor would from time to time announce in passing that he could not publish certain letters for reasons varying from bad handwriting to unsuitable content.⁶ Sometimes, and perhaps merely as a space-saving effort, the editor would choose to paraphrase the gist of a letter in two or three lines instead of publishing the whole submission as received.⁷ He clearly had to be creative in dealing with the newly literate authors' logic and unpolished construction as well as with the challenges attending a language only just being reduced to writing. The editor's own grasp of Sesotho

⁵ The following policy applied to letters submitted to *Leselinyana*: "The editor of *Leselinyana* bears no responsibility for the letters whereby their authors seek to raise issues, or even to ask questions, or to answer them. What we request is this one thing, the letters must be written on only one page, and they must be well written. The *moruti* does not in any way commit himself to publish every letter that is received".

⁶ E.g. F. E. M.'s *Lengolo* (Letter) and J P's *Lengolo* 15 April 1885 are both indecipherable to the editor and therefore unpublished.

⁷ E.g. Isaac Molepo, *Lengolo*, February 1878. See my comments on this particular letter in "Spelling The Faith Or Coping With Biblical Literacy? Introducing 19th Century Basotho Christians" forthcoming in *Theologia Viatorum*.

must have also been a factor, though from what I have come across I must grant that Adolphe Mabile's grasp of Moshoeshoe's tongue was quite impressive.

On the whole, however, the policy was that all submissions must be concise, legible and duly signed by a traceable author. On a few occasions the paper had to be extended by a further two pages in order to cover the high number and/or lengthy body of submissions or advertisements. Nevertheless, and in spite of the policy, not few submissions were published anonymously,⁸ or with only the authors' initials. While it is easy for the most part to work out to whom the initials are in reference to, some initials are yet to be decoded. Some articles were only signed X, XX, A***, A**, K**, or simply ** (see bibliography for examples of actual instances). Other articles were signed A M (the editor's initials) while many more were published unsigned (i.e. unattributed).

Then there was the awkward though then-popular tendency to use only first names when signing articles or when making references to persons. This practice, though implying that everyone knew everyone else on first name basis, unfortunately also means that we may never know for certain whether the surname-less "young twenty-five year old woman" Miriam who submitted a letter to the *Journal des Missions Évangéliques* (1860, 411–412) was a Mosotho or otherwise. The point has been made elsewhere that our focus on *Leselinyana* does not mean to imply that Basotho had no access to other modes of or media for publishing their insights or that they only started writing in the 1860s when *Leselinyana* came into being (see Tshehla 2004, 29–30). Having thus fleetingly sketched a rough picture, we must go on to introduce the selected instalment of *Leselinyana*, the December 1877 issue (*leqephe*⁹) from which David Moiloa's article is taken.

⁸ E.g. one of the two letters published in the December 1877 issue which we look at in some detail below is signed "ke nna mobali e mong oa *Leselinyana*" (It is I, one of the readers of *Leselinyana*).

⁹ I do modernize the orthography throughout just as I offer my translation of the original Sesotho. For instance, instead of *Leképhe* I offer the modern Sesotho *leqephe*. Incidentally, *leqephe* ("page") could mean "issue" or "volume" or "number" or "edition" but a quick glance at the English counterpart of *Leselinyana*, published only between 1872 and 1877 as *The Little Light of Basutoland*, affirms "number" as the intended equivalent.

4. *A typical Leselinyana instalment*

From its inception in November 1863 to the Basotho-Boer War (*Ntoa ea Segiti*) that broke out in 1865, a typical *Leselinyana* instalment was four pages long, each page in two columns and in the region of today's size A4. When *Leselinyana* resumed in 1870 a standard issue was eight pages long, generally column-less and just over today's size A5. This was the case from January 1870 to November 1877. From our selected December 1877 issue onwards both the columns and A4 size are resumed while the number of pages remains eight; a slogan is also introduced at the head of the newspaper: "*Ea Bohlale O Ithuta Ka Mehla*" ("A wise person learns at all times"). The December 1877 edition happens also to inaugurate the era of the larger-print *Leselinyana*; and more Basotho had gained confidence *vis-à-vis* making submissions to *Leselinyana* by this time than in the earlier years.

In the December 1877 issue, the first main article is titled "Do not be overcome by Evil". The crux of this homily is that the Christian is always engaged in warfare and "must thus fight appropriately so as to receive the crown of life". This is a clear allusion to 2 Tim 2:1–7. But the main text is Rom 12:21, which is quoted exactly as it appears in the 1898 and 1987 editions of the 1881 Sesotho Bible. The other overtly cited passage is Eph 6:11–17. Allusions to Matt 5:13 and Phil 2:15 also figure. Not only does this and other PEMS missionaries' articles set the tone for the tenor of articles that other contributors might submit for publication to *Leselinyana*, it also sets an example of how scripture is to be deployed in the believer's navigation of modern life.

The "Note to the Readers" that precedes the homily is illuminating. It is given in English and Sesotho respectively. In the shorter English note, replacing the customary contents-list on the front page and hardly ever encountered before or again in this Sesotho periodical, the editor declares among other things that

Missionaries of other Societies are at liberty to use the columns of *Leselinyana*, provided they keep to what they know to be the general tenor of the paper. Catechists to pay half price.

From the adjoining and more detailed Sesotho note is intimated, *inter alia*, that catechists, who have until then been getting *Leselinyana* free of charge will now pay half price.

Hitherto, catechists have received *Leselinyana* free of charge; but they cannot blame us if we henceforth request that they pay half of the price of the newspaper, which is 1s 3d for the small print and 2s for the larger print edition.

The Sesotho note has no reference to “Missionaries of other Societies” since, I presume, these need not understand Sesotho if the newspaper’s circulation is wide enough. Otherwise, how else does one explain the need for this absolutely once-off English note in a Sesotho newspaper? If my guess is correct, it becomes plausible that such “missionaries of other societies” could submit in and have their articles translated for them from languages other than Sesotho. Our PEMS colleagues had by this time mastered the art of translating into Sesotho; the Sesotho NT had appeared in 1855 already. Thus, we encounter one of the ways whereby the editorial team could intervene in assuring the “quality” of *Leselinyana*; the need for translation confers control on those who can satisfy it and wrests artistry away from original authors.

On the other hand, the English note had no reference to catechists making submissions to *Leselinyana* because, it seems that, among those who do not understand Sesotho, only “missionaries of other societies” can make contributions to *Leselinyana*. Put positively, whereas provision will be made for those missionaries who have not yet subdued Sesotho, no comparable competency exists among our PEMS missionaries for languages such as IsiZulu for example. The Sesotho note continues:

Regarding Lesotho, we still plead with both missionaries and catechists to send us in short letters news of the work of Molimo [“God”] . . . As we begin the 12th year of *Leselinyana*’s existence, we trust that Molimo will continue to bless it so it can continue to teach, to shed light, to encourage, to make wiser, and to rebuke bad things, as always.¹⁰

¹⁰ To further corroborate the spirit in which *Leselinyana* was published, I cite from the January 1871 editorial, p. 1. “We do not intend to make profit through *Leselinyana*. Moreover, as things stand today the minimal price for which it is sold hardly compensates our sweat and labour. Our intentions about *Leselinyana* lie elsewhere: we publish it in order to teach (*ruta*), to advise, to rebuke, and foster the advancement of its readers in Molimo’s way. It aims to follow closely behind the big/great Light (*Leseli*) that is called the Word of Molimo, and to offer the latter support in its great work . . . Another great intention we wish to achieve is through *Leselinyana* to present to others [of you] thoughts (*mehopolo*) that lead to repentance/conversion.” This claim is confirmed practically a century later by Mangoacla (1963, 6).

If "missionaries of other societies" require special English notes since they battle with Sesotho, then the above functions of *Leselinyana* are clearly not intended for them. So too is the succeeding homily, already noted, entitled "Do not be overcome by evil". Thus is the mission of the newspaper circuitously confirmed, at least in part, viz., through *Leselinyana* the PEMS missionaries sought to evangelize and/or shepherd Basotho and were quite happy to have missionaries of other societies help them out. Also revealed are reasons for the clear undertones of "missionaries" (*baruti*) versus "catechists" (*baboleli*). The former who at this time are all white and expatriate continue to receive and distribute *Leselinyana* from their stations while the latter, who are indigenous disciples and evangelists, must henceforth pay half-price. This is not offensive at all because *Leselinyana* requires funds to survive and continue its noble occupation. But isn't it a little ironic that the brunt should befall those who, as we affirmed at the beginning of this paper, actually carried out the task of taking the Gospel to the remotest nooks of southern Africa?

An update *Tsa Lichaba* ("Re Other Nations") follows the homily. Here we meet snippets on the war of the Gqaleka, elections in France, famine in India, starvation in Asia Minor, and the war between the Russians and the Turks. Updates on *Mosebetsi oa Molimo* ("Molimo's Work") in various places are given next; space does not permit us to pursue these fairly benign and mostly statistical reports. Then ensues a tribute to Thomas Arbousset whose passing on 29 September 1870 at church in France is marked with a mixture of obituary, exhortation as well as reminiscences of achievements among Basotho and elsewhere. Needless to say, this tribute too is replete with scriptural allusions, among which Phil 4:1, 1 Cor 9:1 ff., 2 Pet 2:22, and 2 Tim 4:6-8. Tagged on to this second longest article of the December 1877 issue are passing mentions of the passing on of Phillip Maomo and Adam Nthlororo of Thaba Bosiu, and Deborah Mamoleko of Matatiele as well.

Then follows the longest article of the issue. It comprises "minutes" of the annual national assembly (*Pitso ea Lilemo*), held on 1 November 1877 in Maseru. Present were colonial officers of various ranks, expatriate missionaries (*baruti*), some Basotho chiefs, some of the king's sons, headmen, and other Basotho elders. Each speaker's contribution is noted in the first person, as far as possible, opposite *his* name—these were overwhelmingly men's gatherings. These minutes make for fascinating reading as various Basotho express their

views in the presence of their leaders and fellow-Basotho. Sadly, the identity of their recorder is undeclared, and they cover too many concerns to can consider presently.

The governor's *Molao oa Letsoku* ("Law Against Red Ochre"), with the *moruti*-editor's approving appendix tagged on, precedes the "report" entitled *Ho Fihla ha Barongoa ba Likereke tsa Lesotho Bonyai* ("Messengers of the Churches of Lesotho arrive at Bonyai").¹¹ This is another instructive piece by those who, as we have already stated, are actually responsible for the spread of the Gospel around southern Africa. A monthly quiz¹² then precedes the *Mangolo* ("Letters") section. The latter in this issue comprises only two letters, one of which is *anonymous* and thus dubious for our purposes; the other is written by David Moiloa and occupies us shortly.¹³ On the last page feature *Litabana*

¹¹ This account of the journey and the ordeals attending it is worth reproducing, albeit in shortened form. "To the Congregations of Lesotho. We reckon that your hearts and ears wish to learn how we are faring. Know then that we have arrived at Bonyai. We currently reside by the principal (lit. "first") chief, Majakobobe. As for our health, we have no ill to report other than Aaron's sore arm, whose prognosis remains unclear to us. Concerning our journey, from Goedgedacht, we travelled well, better than we could describe, the effect of Molimo's protection. Now here is what we were spared from: we passed through path-less forests; even so, we were never troubled on account of them. Through parched turfs; even then we were supplied with water sufficient to our needs. Through large muddy/sandy rivers, our bulls were given adequate strength to pull our carts as if on dry land; at no single river were we forced to unload our luggage because our bulls could not cope, we made it through them all with ease. Amid wild beasts . . . they caused us no injury. What is more, on the day we crossed the Limpopo River, some of our bulls spent the night on the other side of the river. We feared the worst. However, they were still there in the morning, whereas later that very day a lion came by and roared around the same spot. This matter puzzled us for some time, until we remembered the Lord's saying in Matthew 28:20, which says, 'Behold, I am with you always, till the end of everything'. We then realized that we were not alone but had an extra companion at that place. We got to the last rivers, viz., Seketsi and Lande. As we were busy getting our carts across, especially at Seketsi, some people came by, saying their chief requests us to pass by his place . . . Regards to all Molimo's churches. From us, your messengers, ASERE, AARONE, AZAELE, ANDREASE, at Nyanekue, 24 September 1877."

¹² December Question: "What do the names Jehovah, Christ, Messiah, Emmanuel mean? We shall henceforth no longer ask questions, those who normally respond say they are exhausted."

¹³ It must be evident already that sustained treatises were the reserve of those who had, in any case, begun this newspaper in order to achieve definite didactic objectives. The average Mosotho had recourse only to *Mangolo*, while catechists had access also to *Reports on Molimo's work* written from places where they were missionaries. By their nature, therefore, Basotho's contributions were haphazard and relatively religiously unassuming, though certainly revealing of the realities and spiritual tenor of the writings of the time. Relatively infrequently, some Basotho made

("Minor News"),¹⁴ *Litefo* (Payments acknowledged and a plea going out to those who have not yet paid to do so soonest), and a list of debtors and of books available at Morija as well as their respective prices. One of the books that were being published consistently and with growing scope was the Bible.

5. *The Bible*

The Bible seems to have had great potency. The missionaries were rather short-handed, and made much use of local catechists who were often poorly trained. But they could carry the Bible around with them: for most Africans the first and often the only book in their own language that they knew. (Smart 1989, 517)

I see my illiterate and "poorly trained" grandfather and father in Ninian Smart's partisan analysis; the Bible proved to be all they needed to be able to do their important work. But, oh, how effective they were. As the table below shows, by December 1877 the complete

several submissions usually in sustained dialogue with other *Leselinyana* reader-writers.

¹⁴ I think these brief reports are worth capturing here: "In October the Lesotho *marena* (chiefs) went on several rain-making-hunting-sprees (*melutsoane*). But their hope of making it rain in that foolish way that denies Molimo his glory turned out to be vain. As for the Christians, even though they were reluctant to offer prayers for rain since their fellow-heathen [Basotho] would [misread Molimo's reply and] credit their own endeavours instead, they were compelled [to do so] by the realization that they share one fate with the rest of the nation. So they went on their own early morning *molutsoane* [sg] and prayed Molimo, the Owner [or Master] of all things, and he heard them. Indeed we have just had some very good rains, not at all accompanied by storms and floods. We have thus witnessed Molimo saving the nation from drought. What is shameful is that in the midst of that lack of rain, alcohol-drinking *sprees* still persisted. Similarly, those who had some reserve sorghum in barns kept trading with them as though nobody in Lesotho was aware of the impending drought. Even now after it has rained, some will rush to trade with what little reserves they have giving no heed to the possibility that the rain might be short-lived or hailstorms might ensue. A wise person will make sure that the day of harvest finds him/her with still some reserves in the house, so s/he and the children will be out of harm's way. [2] These days it takes only 19 days from England to Cape Town by steamer boat. When the editor of *Leselinyana* came to Africa in 1859 in the company of Thabana Morena's *moruti*, it took them 100 days by wind-propelled ship. How things have changed! [3] *Motheke-theke* is once again on the rise in many towns. It gained ascendance when there was no rain, while the sun stood still. *Thuto* is [thus] again being rejected in many towns because of this futile *motheke-theke*." Mabille's Sesotho-English Dictionary (2000, 300) defines *motheke-theke* as "(from *ho thekesela*), a kind of nervous disease or evil possession".

Sesotho NT would have been in circulation for at least two decades. Parts of the OT existed alongside the NT from the 1840s, but the complete OT only comes onto the scene in the 1880s. Notwithstanding references and allusions to the OT in sermons, hymns, articles, etc. therefore, by 1877 the average literate Mosotho should have had dependable access to the Sesotho NT from the 1840s.

Table 1. Sesotho literature up to the complete Bible

Year	Development
1837	Prayer and School Booklet.
1837/9	Matthew and other parts of the NT.
1840	A selection of 50 chapters of the OT and NT.
1843	The whole NT has been translated.
1844	“Hymns of Zion” is published containing 100 hymns.
1848	The book of Psalms is published.
1849	The four Gospels are published.
1855	The NT is published.
1878	The whole Bible, printed at Morija, is sent abroad for publication.
1881	Complete Bibles are published by BFBS and shipped for SA.
1883	Sesotho Bibles arrive in South Africa.

We also suppose that the text of the NT to which Basotho had access was the best that could be produced at the time, all things considered, and so we treat it as such. But in the absence of translators’ notes, we shall not be rigid in our comparison with the Greek Testament. We could keep multiplying apologia, but in the hope that the foregoing background is helpful, we should now let the letter with an unambiguous Mosotho author, viz., David Moiloa, guide us through this fascinating time in southern African history.

6. *David Moiloa*

We first encounter David Moiloa in the second year of *Leselinyana*’s life, specifically in the February 1865 issue. He is there reported to have answered all of 1864’s questions correctly and hence to have qualified, along with a certain un-surnamed Levi of Thaba Morija, for the promised prize. Moiloa is only described as coming from

Beersheba; Beersheba was Samuel Rolland's notable station.¹⁵ Not much else is encountered in relation to David Moiloa in the pages of *Leselinyana* until he submits the letter presently under consideration.¹⁶ We do realize from these limited glimpses that he must have been a committed Christian. It is on the basis of that confidence in and respect for his commitment to the Faith and its mission that we engage his article, simply published as "The Letter of David Moiloa".

6.1. *The letter of David Moiloa*

From Lehana, October

The times of ignorance are past (Acts 17:30). I surmise that there must be, these days, all over the world only very few nations that do not

¹⁵ "In fact, according to Rolland, Basotho Christians at Beersheba were richer than their European counterparts at the nearby town of Smithfield (Rolland 1987, 91). The abundance of ploughs they had had allowed for the creation of larger fields that led to more productivity. It was this form of power associated with the post-Difaqane Basotho towns that was to become a threat to the immigrant *Boers* communities" (Molapo 2003, 113). The *Boers* in the war of the late 1860s decimated the Beersheba mission station. This fact might help explain why we next meet David Moiloa in Thaba Bosiu.

¹⁶ There is, however, the following discussion that takes place in Thaba Bosiu (A Mabile, February 1870). It is a debate on the subject of missions in view of the Roman Catholics' incursion into evangelical territories. I reproduce part of the article in the hope that the reader will share my frustration over the mention of two David's and my suspicion that one of them was Moiloa. Should my guess be spot on that he is one of the five delegates, it would then appear that Moiloa had attained a significant level of import. "It has been a while since some Basotho Roman Catholic converts reverted back to the Evangelical instruction (*thuto*). One of these people was not satisfied by the absence in Catholic doctrine of any assurance for the afterlife, and we concur. Needless to say the Thaba Bosiu Christians were encouraged by these developments, and they went to teach right next to where the Roman Catholic *thuto* was set up. Simon once met and debated with one of the Catholic *baruti* about faith in Jesus Christ, but to no avail. Then this *moruti* sent to [our] *moruti* at Thaba Bosiu to come so they could discuss these matters. The latter agreed right away, and was accompanied on Sunday 19 December by a good number of Christians and heathens who wished to hear these matters for themselves. They met at Tseki's with two Catholic *baruti* who also had a small number of people accompanying them. Then the Catholic *baruti* objected to discussing their *thuto* amidst such a big group, citing prohibitions to this effect by their laws—of which we are ourselves ignorant. They suggested that if only five people a side could sit together and talk. The *baruti* of the Gospel conceded and appointed Isaiah, David, Simeon, David, and Andrew. But the crowd objected strongly, with Isaiah Taoana, Setlaka of Sehlabeng, David and even the master of the house, Tseki, insisting that if the discussion pertains to truth, then why do it in secret . . ."

know (about) the true Molimo. The number of those who have received the Gospel *thuto* as well as those who have heard it preached far exceeds that of those who do not yet know (of) Molimo, those who still worship images. That is why we are not surprised when we see true worshippers going to worship these days; sometimes it seems as though Molimo does not hear them, whereas the fault lies elsewhere. It is not that Molimo does not hear, but there are still arguments (or dissensions) among black peoples. Even if they know (of) Molimo, they fail to believe in Molimo's power, fearing that such faith might make them Christians.

I have observed this especially here in Tlokoeng. In 1874 we did inform the people of Tlokoeng about the prayer meeting to be held on 22 October at 6 till 8. There was no cloud in the sky. However at 9, clouds began to show, and at 11 it rained heavily. It was a miracle, so much so that we ourselves felt very small on account of it, saying to ourselves, why ever does Molimo hear our cries. When praying we had said that our black cow is Jesus, and we trust that through him we are given all we need for this life and the one to come; we believed because we knew that through him Molimo hears us always. But this first miracle did not send thanks and honour to the Lord. Instead they said, "It was our sheep that made it rain". Today when Christians are asked to pray for rain, we say, "Molimo holds no grudges like us humans; you will have rain if Molimo pleases, because we prefer to have respect rather than disdain for the grace of the Lord".

That is how it is: the Mmanthunya's¹⁷ are still to be found over here in Tlokoeng, whereas the days of ignorance are past.

6.2. *Commentary on the letter*

It is clear that Ntate Moiloa intends the bold claim *Linako tsa ho se tsebe li fetile* ("The times of ignorance are past"; *chronous agnoias*) as the title of his letter. His overall argument is that although indeed the times of ignorance are past, many of his-fellow Basotho are being left behind. To corroborate his assertions he brings to bear the information he would have gathered from reading *Leselinyana* about reality in other places near and far, thereby coming to the rather ambitious conclusion that practically the whole world has had the Gospel preached to it. It is sometimes hard to follow his logic or to figure

¹⁷ Difficult to translate, but from one of the meanings of "thunya" I think it means "those who stir up dust". It could also be a reference to some historic or mythical figure in Sesotho worldview of which I am as yet ignorant.

out his semantic referents, but his overall admonishment of fellow Basotho is quite palpable.

It would be reasonable to assume that Moilola is "citing" from the 1855 Sesotho NT, which was extended into the 1881 complete Bible. However, the 1898 revision of the 1881 Sesotho Bible has *litšiu* ("days") as does its ultimate revision, the 1987 edition. Incidentally Moilola's *linako* ("times") is shared by the only other version of the Sesotho Bible, the dynamic equivalent 1989 version. That Moilola does not seem to follow the letter of the available text affords interesting though certainly inconclusive glimpses of the relationship between an average Mosotho believer and the Bible, at least during Moilola's times. Based on its not making it into the Sesotho Bible until 1989, it seems to me that Moilola was borrowing *linako* from sermons (or other language versions of the Bible) instead of from private study of the Sesotho Bible.

Lichaba ha li sa le kae tse sa tsebeng Molimo oa nnete: though written in plain language, this statement could be translated in two ways as the Sesotho is indecisive. It means either, there must now exist "only very few nations that do not know the true Molimo" or "that do not know *about* the true Molimo". The reason for this widespread knowledge of or about Molimo clearly revolves, in Moilola's eyes, around the fact that the Gospel is being proclaimed all over the world. Then the next sentence equates those who have received the Gospel with those who have heard it preached while contrasting them with those who do not yet know (of) Molimo and so still worship images. Furthermore, there are those who clearly know of Molimo but fear becoming Christians. It seems we must conclude that knowing about rather than having personal evangelical knowledge of Molimo is what the author intends.

In so concluding we consider plausible connections with John 17:3 and 1 John 5:20, though notwithstanding 2 Chr 15:3, Jer 10:10, and 1 Thess 1:9 among others. But most importantly we wonder what the author's understanding of "Molimo" or "knowledge of Molimo" must be if he reckons that there remain among Basotho those who do not yet know (of) Molimo. For instance, has Molimo not always been the Molimo of Basotho? Is there here a suggestion of some novel or special knowledge of Molimo that supersedes the traditional knowledge that all Basotho should have?

Secondly, Moilola's Molimo does not co-exist well with "images", whereas some Basotho *still* worship images. Is this a recent development

on Molimo's part owing to the arrival of the Christian faith with its Canon, or has the Molimo of Basotho always taken exception to images? What sorts of images or representations were Basotho given to worshipping? Moiloa's text does not name or describe even one of these objects of worship, to our loss. On the other hand, it is conceivable that the literary context of Acts 17 might have commended this talk of *litšoantšo* (images) to Moiloa. For instance in Acts 17:16 both the 1898 and 1987 editions have *melimo ea litšoantšo* (lit. "gods of/in images") while the 1989 version proffers *litšoantšo tsa melimo ea bohata* (lit. "images of false gods").

But I am impressed by Moiloa's choosing to leave out *melimo* ("gods") in connection with *litšoantšo* ("images"). In other words, unlike the author of the Acts narrative, Moiloa does not at all regard these images as deserving even the status of the gods—they are images finish and *klaar*. Like Paul who insists that false gods are no gods at all and the food sacrificed to them thus remains ordinary food (1 Cor 8 and 10), Moiloa is not going to credit these images with any effectuality. Still I suspect that, again like Paul, Moiloa would urge believers not to be casual in their treatment of these statues.

Romans 1:16–32 might be the reason behind the reference to knowing (about) Molimo and yet denying Molimo's power. The feature of oral presentation that pays attention to the use of a narrative more than to its exact wording or literary context seems to still be in force. The Johannine reference to *barapeli ba nnete* ("true worshippers"), clearly to be distinguished from idol-worshippers, is replicated exactly as in the 1898 and 1987 Sesotho texts of John 4:23 while the 1989 version has *bakhumameli ba nnete*. The verbs *khumamela* and *rapela* both refer to an act, not always intercessory, of overt submission to or adoration of a present or felt higher being. They both entail admission by the entreater that s/he is powerless and the entreated is powerful. Traditionally, however, *khumamela* tends to be reserved for worship (as an end in itself) and *rapela* for prayer or entreaty (with a distinct end in sight).

"Sometimes it appears as though Molimo does not hear them" is reference to perseverance when prospects seem bleak. Jesus taught us to pray incessantly and never to faint (e.g. Luke 18:1–8). But this is also clearly a reference to one of the more common Psalms motifs (e.g. Ps 37), or perhaps one could say one of the Wisdom motifs in dialogue with which, for instance, the canonical book of Job was written. As for "people fearing to become Christians", there are

known NT examples at least (e.g. Acts 26:28; cf. Acts 24:25?)—however dissimilar the respective contexts are.

The bleak circumstances in which the miracle of rain occurs are reiterated by the fact that when they went to pray there was no cloud in the sky. In 1 Kings 18 we encounter a comparable rain-miracle. When Elijah told Ahab to go up, eat and drink there was not even the smallest cloud in the sky. But thanks to the prayers and faith of Elijah, it rained hard that very same day. The geo-temporal space between Elijah, Paul, etc. is easily traversable and their experiences facilely sharable. We are walking here among the living; we are constantly facing the truth that Molimo is not Molimo of the dead but of the living (Mark 12:27).

“Through Jesus we are given all we need for this life and the one to come” (see 1 Tim 4:8; 2 Pet 1:3) and “we believed because we knew that through him Molimo hears us always” (1 John 5:14–15). The question of Jesus being *khomo e ntsho* (“the black cow”)¹⁸ and the reference, “it was our sheep that made it rain”,¹⁹ baffle me. Sacrificial rites are most likely lurking in the background, but I am yet to uncover which Basotho rituals Moiloa is here alluding to. “But this first miracle did not send thanks and honour to the Lord.” A sign or miracle not generating the desired response is another biblical theme although it is not simply stated anywhere in the biblical text (cf. Amos 6:13 and Acts 3:12).

¹⁸ References to black horses abound in the Bible (e.g. in prophetic utterances in Zech 6:2–6 and Rev 6:5). On the other hand the significance of the cow for the Mosotho is indubitable. What is more, in the Elijah story (1 Kgs 18:45) the heavens become black with clouds and wind before it pours. And of course the sacrificing of cows between Elijah and Baal’s 450 prophets precedes the rain-miracle story. Nevertheless the combination of black and cow and sheep remains enigmatic.

¹⁹ In the inaugural issue of *Leselinyana* (November 1863), the founder editor, Adolphe Mabille, recounts in an article entitled *Pula* (“Rain”) how following the previous year’s drought, the Basotho chiefs (*marena*) had asked *baruti* and the whole nation to pray to Molimo for rain. They said, “It is Molimo who makes it rain, to Molimo only must the whole nation pray”. Consequently, it rained healthily in 1863 but no thanksgiving or recognition was given to Molimo. All that Basotho cared about was the prospect of plenty beer on account of a good sorghum harvest. He then quotes Jer 14:22 and enjoins the people to learn, from even animals, to drink appropriately. Here too there is no mention of sheep!

7. Concluding observations

It is becoming apparent already from our preliminary investigation that the Basotho, in their contributions to *Leselinyana*, employed among other tools the one mentioned by Elphick and Davenport, viz., making the Bible and Christian “values” an overt feature of their writings. Their writings, just as those of the expatriate PEMS missionaries, are replete with scriptural references and allusions, as we have seen. Therefore, our inquiry into how they appropriated the Bible is justified. Quantitatively though, Basotho contributions to *Leselinyana* are not as abounding with scripture references as are those of their white missionary colleagues. This must have had to do with the fact that the latter perceived themselves as teachers while the former were seen, and indeed regarded themselves, as apprentices, catechists. The tenor of the newspaper is maintained rather scrupulously. Moiloa’s article is a castigation of Basotho for holding on to the worship of images whereas the true Molimo now stands revealed in the Gospel.

The *linako-litšiu* matter betrays a sharp clue to Basotho readings of the Bible. The Sesotho of the wider literary context of Acts (i.e., 14:16–17) does not help much other than in crediting Molimo for rain. The Greek *en tais paroichmenais geneais* is translated by the Sesotho Bibles as either *mehleng e fetileng* (1987, “past times”) or, more accurately, *melokong e fetileng* (1989, “past generations”). They are thus of little additional value to the debate especially since Moiloa does not employ either *mehla* or *meloko*.

More lucid is the observation that Basotho read the Bible in a participatory manner. Their lives and experiences parallel those narrated in the Bible. In this connection, what is said, particularly by the Lord, to those biblical characters applies as well to these Basotho missionaries and their fellows. For instance, Matt 28:20 would have been a popular commissioning text as the letter of the messengers to Bonyai echoes. Moiloa certainly straightforwardly identified with such struggles as against the worship of “Baal” (whatever the “teachers” would have equated “Baal” to among the Basotho).

The Johannine corpus and Acts, but also Romans and 1 Timothy seem user-friendly in a context of burgeoning discipleship, or as prescribed texts for converts just acceding to literacy. My personal experience as a Pentecostal Christian who has undertaken the discipling of converts over the years concurs. The Gospel according to John almost invariably provides a starting point in such instances.

Of the theological questions raised in the analysis above, the place of Molimo is most outstanding and most fundamental. The letter of the messengers presumes much and only mentions Molimo's protection and the chief's lack of interest in matters pertaining to Molimo. Whereas the first matter is hardly striking from the perspective of Basotho worldview, it is the latter that better betrays their self-understanding. It confirms Moilola's assertion that Basotho know of Molimo but refuse to make the right commitment. The chief does not show alarm at talk of "Molimo"—only disinterest. Molimo is a familiar concept to him—what is of urgent interest to him though is gunpowder. This matter of Molimo's perception by Basotho at this time certainly requires further investigation that shall emerge as we engage more of these Basotho writings. Sepetla Molapo (2003, 53) for instance claims that the Molimo-cult only came to the fore with the advent of the Christian missionaries and the systematic undermining of the *balimo* ("ancestors") cult. Much more digging awaits us as we seek to deepen our understanding of the story of the Basotho from the days of apparent ignorance of Molimo to the present.

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THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES¹

Jan Botha

ABSTRACT

Countries, governments and international agencies have explicit expectations of and goals for higher education. In a number of recent reports and studies, these expectations have been articulated with particular reference to the developing world, including the African continent. In this essay the possible relation of the study of the NT in African Universities to these expectations and goals are considered.

1. *Introduction*

In her presidential address to the *Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature* (SBL) in 1987, Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza referred to the statement of Rudolf Bultmann that World War II had no effect whatsoever on his NT scholarship. In her address she argued that the dominant “scientist” ethos of biblical scholarship should be “decentred” in the scholarly community of the SBL and “recentred” to become “a critical interpretive praxis for liberation”. To achieve this, she argued, a double ethics is needed: an ethics of historical reading (which asks what kind of readings can do justice to the biblical text in its historical context) and an ethics of accountability (which holds the biblical interpreter responsible not only for the choice of theoretical interpretive models but also of the consequences of the biblical text and its meanings” (Schussler Fiorenza 1988, 14–15).

In this essay, I will address this challenge for social accountability for NT scholarship from a somewhat different perspective and in a broader context than the scholarly guild within which biblical

¹ I acknowledge the contribution of my colleague, Dr. Dudzirai Chimera (Baptist Theological Seminary, Gweru, Zimbabwe), to this paper.

scholars usually conduct their work. I will consider the issue in the context and from the perspective of what universities are (or can be), in particular in the African context (as part of the developing world).

2. African universities offering learning and teaching and research opportunities in NT Studies

The NT is included in the research activities and in the learning and teaching programmes of various universities in different African countries. For the purposes of this essay a survey of the institutions considered to be “universities” was undertaken, limited to public and private institutions functioning on a post-secondary level. However, not all post-secondary institutions are universities, therefore the scope of the survey was narrowed down to those institutions operating at a university level as defined in the *International Standard Classification of Education* (ISCED 1997), namely ISCED levels 5 and higher. For the purposes of this survey the most recent publication of the *Association of African Universities* (AAU) was used, namely the *Guide to Higher Education in Africa* (AAU 2002) as well as the 2003 publication of Taferra and Altbach, *African Higher Education: An International Reference Handbook*. The information in these books was updated, as far as possible, with current information about African universities available on the internet. However, since the data for the 2002 and the 2003 publications were mostly collected during the years preceding these publication dates, and since web sites of institutions (where available) do not always contain up-to-date information, the information may not in all cases necessarily represent the actual state of affairs as it was in August 2004 when this survey was completed.

In the 54 African countries with one or more universities a total of 312 universities was identified. Of these universities, about 40 universities, located in twelve different countries, include research and/or teaching programmes in NT Studies in their activities. In a number of cases NT Studies are housed within a faculty of theology (e.g. in certain universities in South Africa, the DRC, Ghana, Kenya and Zimbabwe). Other universities house it in faculties or institutes (e.g. in Humanities, Arts, African and Democracy Studies) or in departments (e.g. biblical or religious studies).

From this survey, it became clear that the New Testament is stud-

ied and taught in a number of universities in different African countries, although in not as many cases as one would expect given the extent to which Christianity is practised on the African continent. There are, of course, also many schools and colleges where the NT is studied and/or taught. However, these institutions are not universities and are therefore beyond the scope of this paper.

For a discussion on the nature of those institutions included in the scope of this paper, namely universities, four models are proposed in the next section.

3. *Four metaphors for "the university"*

Even a superficial glance at the history of higher education indicates that there is no single and comprehensive definition of the institution known as "a university". To clarify some of the differences in definitions of "a university", let us consider four possible metaphors for a university, namely, Athens, Berlin, New York and Calcutta.

This overview is roughly chronological in nature. The purpose of this discussion is not to present a comprehensive and nuanced overview of the history of the university but rather to present generalisations at the hand of these four metaphors.

3.1. *Athens as metaphor for the university*

Arguably, the first "university" was the Academy founded in 387 BC by the Greek philosopher Plato in the grove of Academos near Athens, where students were taught philosophy, mathematics and gymnastics.²

The oldest (Western) universities originate from the late 11th century.³ Whereas Bologna University is usually indicated as the oldest

² For an exposition of the ancient institutions of learning as "a place to think" (a *phrontisterion*), cf. the inaugural lecture of Thom (1997).

³ The University of Bologna: founded 1088; University of Paris: founded 1150; University of Oxford: founded 1167; University of Salamanca: founded 1218; University of Padua: founded 1222; University of Naples: founded 1224; University of Toulouse: founded 1229; University of Siena: founded 1240; Sorbonne (University of Paris): founded 1253; University of Cambridge: founded 1281; University of Montpellier: founded 1289; University of Prague: founded 1348; Jagiellonian University, Krakow: founded 1364; University of Vienna: founded 1365; University of Erfurt:

university, it is interesting to note that an institution meeting all the characteristics of the medieval Western university existed in Cairo before the emergence of Bologna (Cobban 1992, 1246). In the context of this paper on African universities, this is noteworthy.

The term *studium generale* describes the medieval notion of a full-fledged university: it was an institution where facilities for study were organized, and which was able to attract students from beyond the local region (Cobban 1992, 1246). Two examples:

- The University of Bologna was formed between the 11th and 14th centuries, mainly around the study of Roman law as laid down in the Justinian Code. Thanks to the work of Irnerius, who initiated a systematic study of the *Corpus Iuris* of Gratianus and to whom we owe the first complete compilation of canon law, it became famous throughout Europe.
- Teaching existed at Oxford in some form in 1096 and developed rapidly from 1167, when Henry II banned English students from attending the University of Paris. In 1188 the historian, Gerald of Wales, gave a public reading to the assembled Oxford dons and in 1190 the arrival of Emo of Friesland, the first known overseas student, set in motion the University's tradition of international scholarly links. By 1201, the University was headed by a *magister scholarum* Oxonie, on whom the title of Chancellor was conferred in 1214, and in 1231 the masters were recognized as a *universitas*.

In Medieval Europe young men proceeded to the university when they had completed the study of the *trivium*: the preparatory arts of grammar, rhetoric, and logic; and the *quadrivium*: arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.

Perhaps the most well-known expression of the medieval and early modern understanding of a university is Newman's *The Idea of the University* (1854):

founded (1379); University of Heidelberg: founded 1385; University of Cologne: founded 1388; University of Leipzig: founded 1409; University of St Andrews: founded 1411; University of Leuven: founded 1425; University of Barcelona: founded 1450; University of Glasgow: founded 1451; University of Uppsala: founded 1477; University of Copenhagen: founded 1479; University of Aberdeen: founded 1494; Wittenberg University: founded 1502; University of Gent: founded 1559; University of Leiden: founded 1575; University of Edinburgh: founded 1583; University of Dublin: founded 1592.

(i)t is a school of knowledge of every kind, consisting of teachers and learners from every quarter . . . a University seems to be in its essence, a place for the communication and circulation of thought, by means of personal intercourse, through a wide extent of country.

Mind came first, and was the foundation of the academical polity; but it soon brought along with it, and gathered round itself, the gifts of fortune and the prizes of life.

In the light of these brief remarks on the history of ancient and medieval universities, an *Athens* university can be characterized as a university dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, which can also lead to a range of other benefits.

Although the humanities flourish in the *Athens* university, the activities of these universities are not limited to the humanities. However, in its values and ethos it emulates, as a manner of speaking, a philosophy or a history department.

3.2. Berlin as metaphor for the university

The University of Berlin was founded in Berlin in 1810, and the foundation concept proposed by Wilhelm von Humboldt gave it the title “Mother of all modern universities”. This concept envisaged a “*Universitas litterarum*” which would achieve a unity of teaching and research and provide students with an all-round humanist education. This university was conceived as, *inter alia*, a place for the transmission of culture.

This concept spread throughout the world and gave rise to the foundation of many universities of the same type over the next century and a half. The concept proposed by Von Humboldt was influenced, among others, by the reform ideas of the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte and by the theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher.

From the outset, the university in Berlin had the four classical faculties of Law, Medicine, Philosophy and Theology. However, partly due to the influence of the natural scientist, Alexander von Humboldt, the university also pioneered the introduction of many new disciplines. The chemist August Wilhelm von Hofmann, the physicist Hermann von Helmholtz, the mathematicians Ernst Kummer, Leopold Kronecker, Karl Theodor Weierstrass (the “triple star of Mathematics”) and the medical scientists Johannes Müller and Rudolf Virchow became known in their specialist areas far beyond the university in Berlin (cf. Frijhof 1992).

So, for our purposes, let us picture a *Humboldt* type university as a research university, focusing on research in the basic (natural and social) sciences. Let us imagine the stereotypical German professor with his white coat in his laboratory with his (indeed, *his*) revering graduate students as the image of this university. In the *Berlin* type university, “blue sky” research in the basic (natural and social) sciences and postgraduate studies thrive. In its values and ethos, its principles and practices, it emulates the chemistry or physics department and its research undertaken in the laboratories.

3.3. *New York as a metaphor for the university*

New York is used here as metaphor for, amongst others, Clark’s notion of the “entrepreneurial university”. Chalmers University in Sweden is discussed by Clark (1998) as a very successful example of the entrepreneurial university. *New York* is the place of the market. Market forces, entrepreneurial sophistication and prowess thrive. The *New York* type university educates and trains students (including professionals) to succeed in the fast-moving and dynamic world of the market. Market principles and market language characterize its organization. Success is predominantly understood as the financial and social success of the institutions themselves and of their graduates.

While the *New York* type university finds its expression perhaps most pertinently in the business school or the faculty of commerce, it should not be limited to the business school only. In fact, a drive to “commercialize” the “intellectual capital” of the university in all possible disciplines is characterizing many institutions today.

3.4. *Calcutta as a metaphor for the university*

The *Calcutta* university sees itself predominantly as a development-orientated university. It focuses on the (underprivileged in the) community, and in particular on the eradication of poverty through developmental activities in all possible areas. It welcomes mature students, including, as a priority, also those who did not have opportunities to study earlier in their lives. It emphasizes service-learning and life-long learning, it focuses on applied research, and it has quite often an activist stance. In its values and ethos, it emulates the department of social work or the department of nursing.

4. *Types of Higher Education Institutions*

However, let me immediately proceed to complicate these four rather neat (and admittedly, vast) generalizations. Different institutional types can be distinguished in higher education, namely the research university, the regional/provincial university, the professional school, the business school, and the distance education institution. Let us briefly consider the World Bank's⁴ definitions of these institutional types (The World Bank 2000).

4.1. *Research Universities*

Research universities tend to be public and not for profit. Their overriding goals are achieving research excellence across many fields and providing high-quality education. They pursue these goals by having relatively light faculty teaching loads, emphasizing research accomplishments in recruitment and promotion decisions, adopting international standards for awarding degrees, and being highly selective about the students they admit. They are most closely connected to advances in knowledge, they monitor breakthroughs in many fields, and they investigate ways to exploit important results for social and private gain. Their instruction—generally for both first and post-graduate degrees—is aimed at the country's most hard-working and best-prepared students. Research universities also have the capacity to offer the most complete programmes of general education

General education in research universities should consist of “an intensive general education curriculum that provides exceptionally promising, intellectually oriented students with a solid basis for their careers or for advanced specialist study” (The World Bank 2002, 123). This type of general education is not for the masses.

4.2. *Provincial or Regional Universities*

Institutions that focus predominantly on producing large numbers of graduates are another key component of a higher education system.

⁴ Although the views expressed in different recent World Bank studies on higher education are used and in general supported in this paper, it is important to keep in mind that many people in developing countries as well as a growing number of people in other countries are sympathetic towards the criticism of the World Bank expressed by anti-globalisation movements (see Klein 2000).

They emphasize teaching and the training of “job-ready” graduates, especially those who can meet local skills requirements in areas such as manufacturing, business, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and mining. They are commonly found in both the public and private sectors, and tend to be geographically dispersed so that collectively they can cater to the many students who do not leave home to attend a higher education institution. Provincial or regional universities often produce the majority of a country’s graduates and tend to lie at the heart of the system’s expansion. Some institutions offer 2-year tertiary level degrees, much like community colleges in many developed countries, offering another potential channel for providing mass higher education.

4.3. *Professional Schools*

Freestanding professional schools—and professional faculties in universities—provide training in fields such as law, medicine, business and teaching, as well as other areas outside the jurisdiction of traditional arts and sciences faculties. Professional schools play a critical role in national development. For-profit private institutions, in particular, can be directed into this area by market forces, concentrating on preparing students for careers with high private returns. Professional schools commonly pay little attention to providing a general education that would serve many students (and society) well.

The compilers of the World Bank report argue that a “discrete and substantial component of general education, which help to broaden the experience of students engaged in specialist, professional or technical study” needs to be included in the curricula of these regional universities and professional schools (The World Bank 2000, 123).

4.4. *Vocational Schools*

Vocational schools operate in much the same way as professional schools, but at a different level. They endeavour to impart practical skills needed for specific jobs in areas such as nursing, auto mechanics, bookkeeping, computers, electronics, and machining. They may be parallel to (or part of) the secondary education system, or part of the post-secondary system, but they are not often considered a component of the higher education system *per se*. These schools, many

of which are private and for profit, play an important role in satisfying real labour-market demands.

4.5. *Virtual Universities and Distance Learning*

Distance learning is an increasingly important part of the higher education system, with its ability to reach students in remote areas and address the higher education needs of adults. Distance learning can be offered by a traditional educational institution or by institutions that specialize in this mode of study.

5. *The models and the institutional types*

I suggest that more than one of the institutional types can be found in all four “metaphorical universities” (*Athens, Berlin, New York, Calcutta*) identified above.

An *Athens* research university will therefore differ from a *Berlin, New York* or *Calcutta* research university but in all four cases it can be a research university. Similarly, a professional school can be operated in terms of all four models, although it may perhaps be more at home in the New York model than in the others. Although regional/provincial universities and vocational schools tend to be more generally associated with the *Calcutta* model, it does not imply that *Athens, Berlin* or *New York* universities exclude from its activities the promotion of the wellbeing of the underprivileged and the development of society.

Therefore, I am not suggesting a hierarchy in prestige with *Athens* universities at the top and *Calcutta* universities at the bottom. I am also not suggesting a hierarchy in prestige with the research university at the top and the vocational school at the bottom.

However, I realize that this suggestion is not necessarily an accurate expression of current reality and current perceptions. In the opinion of many people there are, unfortunately, status and prestige differences between these models and institutional types.

6. *Divergent forces*

All universities, of whatever model or type, are today subjected to the divergent and conflicting claims. Rossouw (1992) made an analysis of these conflicting claims. He maintains that it can be classified and expressed in terms of five polar oppositions, namely identity and relevance, universality and particularity, elitism and egalitarianism, institutional autonomy and government control, and *communitas* and corporation. Although the last two polar oppositions usually elicit perhaps the most heated debates in the scholarly guild, I will limit my discussion in this paper to the first three.

6.1. *Identity and relevance*

Traditionally the university found its identity in the institutionalization of academic thought, in the human desire for scientific knowledge. Boyer (1990) identifies four types of scholarship: scholarship of discovery, scholarship of integration, scholarship of application and scholarship of dissemination.

Rossouw (1993) maintains that an institution limiting itself exclusively to only one type of scholarship (namely research *or* teaching), ceases to be a university. Rossouw argues as follows: crucial to the identity of a university is the intrinsic value of knowledge: it frees the individual and the community from prejudgements, superstitions and other intellectual blockages. Knowledge also has an instrumental value: it raises our ability to orientate ourselves *vis-à-vis* reality and it offers possibilities for application. It contributes to a range of intellectual skills through which we can cope with social, economical and political challenges. It leads to the development of technical means and methods to rule over our physical environment and to transform it in manners suited to our needs and desires.

Due to its phenomenal success the university has become indispensable and a growing need for its services and products has developed. The result is that *relevance* became a demand, in particular, relevance to the short-term needs of the world of work and the social and economic welfare of a country. Research projects now usually have to indicate their relevance to the short-term needs and therefore their *usefulness*.

Rossouw (1993, 37) suggests the very helpful image of the bi-focal lens as a possible way to respond to the conflicting demands of

knowledge and science and relevance: the immediate short-term needs are at first sight (and simultaneously) seen as part of broader and deeper theoretical reflection:

Relevansie beteken om relevant te wees vir 'n saak wat saak maak. Waarop dit neerkom is dat die saak wat die universiteit maak, nie kortsigtig bekyk sal word as dié van korttermyndienstigheid nie, maar eerder met 'n bifokale lens, dit wil sê met die soort visie wat onmiddellike praktiese behoeftes as't ware met één oogopslag in die wyer strekkende en verder siende blik van die teoretiese denke kan opneem.

6.2. *Universality and particularity*

On the one hand, the university represents universal values that transcend boundaries and enhances an inclusive expression of humanity. On the other hand, the university is a social institution functioning in a specific social and cultural environment

Rossouw maintains that the universal or academic values can be summarised as rationality and objectivity. Rationality includes substantiated judgements, avoiding prejudgements, honest consideration of all available evidence, healthy scepticism, and openness for alternative ideas and viewpoints. Objectivity includes distance and suspension of subjective involvement, free dialogue and critical thought, awareness of own fallibility, and need to submit all ideas and conclusions to intersubjective testing and control.

On the other hand, for a university to be able to function effectively, it needs to relate to the characteristic social and cultural values of its context. Exactly *how* a university should relate to its context (in social, cultural, political, and ideological terms) is a matter of much debate, in fact, ongoing debate building on a long and chequered history. For example, Mokgaba (2004) maintains that there is a need for South African universities to Africanise, and he defines this as follows:

... critical reflection on historical conditions and future possibilities for knowledge production and more particularly: an institutional transformation in higher education that will provide for the production of knowledge that recognizes the African condition as historical and defines its task as one of coming to grips with it critically. This transformation will:

- decolonize higher education and thus Africanise it;
- if it is democratic (inclusive and sensitive to historical realities) it will give rise to a notion of Africanism that will necessarily repudiate

racism and the racialised notion of “African” inherited from the colonial period;

- give us a new paradigm and a new approach in knowledge-seeking.

The tension between the universal and the particular are well known. In universities in developing countries there are, unfortunately, many examples where universities were or are hi-jacked or threatened by certain communities and/or governments (quite often despots). An example of this is the speech of the president of Zimbabwe on 9 August 2004, as reported in the *Herald*:

Cde Mugabe said the education system was being revamped to ensure that it produces patriotic students who cherish the gains of independence.

“In the past they produced graduates who became enemies of the struggle. If our institutions have a capacity to produce enemies of the struggle, then they are ill-equipped or do not deserve to be there” (*The Herald Online*, 10 August 2004).

6.3. *Elitism and Egalitarianism*

Traditionally universities espoused an elitism of talent and quality and excellence as included in its primary criteria. This is in tension with the demand for equal opportunities *for all*, (including equal opportunities to higher education), irrespective of qualifications and capabilities.

In many countries all over the world, including the countries on the African continent, higher education is characterized by massification. The World Bank report on higher education in developing countries (2002) gives the following description of the need for and effects of massification at an African university, the University of Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo:

Like most developing countries, the DRC faces powerful pressures to expand its higher education sector. After achieving independence from Belgium in 1960, what is now the third largest African country, with a current population of 47 million, it had only two universities, both established in the mid-1950s. Their combined enrolment was around 2 000 students. Five years later, in 1965, enrolment in higher education—as a proportion of the number of people at the ages most relevant to higher education—had still barely moved above zero. Both the government and private organizations have attempted to address the growing demand. Despite various initiatives, demand continues to outstrip capacity. Acute shortages are evident in technology, the sciences, and medicine—fields in which training is particularly expensive to

provide. The number of requests for enrolment in these fields is so high that during the academic year 1995–96, at the Public University of Kinshasa, nearly 2 500 freshmen packed a single class in biomedical sciences. And students are right to seek to become physicians, given that the DRC has only one doctor for every 14 000 inhabitants. By 1995 the country continued to have an extremely low proportion of its population enrolled in higher education, compared to other developing countries. Moreover, most of the new schools replicate each other, and programs in medicine, technology, or specialized education remain rare.

The DRC, like many developing countries, faces the challenge of responding to increasing demand while attempting to provide a quality education. The current situation is extremely difficult. Most universities, public and private, lack the necessary funds to provide basic educational infrastructure—sufficiently spacious classrooms, laboratories, equipped teaching hospitals, libraries, computers, and Internet access. In general, students have no textbooks, and professors must dictate their notes or copy them onto a blackboard.

7. *Important issues for Africa and the role universities are expected to play*

Rossouw (1993) proposes the use of a bi-focal lens as a way in which universities can possibly respond to the seemingly conflicting demands of science and knowledge and scholarship *via-à-vis* relevance. The immediate needs/problems/issues have to be seen with one and the same glimpse in the broader and deeper context of theoretical reflection and scientific consideration.

To enable us to do this, we need to get an idea of the issues deemed to be important for Africa, *as identified by Africans*. These issues are expressed, *inter alia*, in the action plans of the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD), the research focus areas of the South African research Foundation (NRF), and the South African White Paper and *National Plan for Higher Education*.

Two qualifications are necessary here: many of the following examples of “important issues for Africa” are taken from South African sources and have been developed by South Africans with the South African context in mind. They are therefore indeed issues of importance for Africa. However, all the issues deemed to be of importance for South Africa cannot simply be transposed to the rest of the continent as if all of them are equally important for all other African countries.

7.1. *NEPAD*

The *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD) “has been conceived by African Heads of State as a development framework that will put Africa back on the world's development agenda, and on the path to irreversible and sustainable development, so that Africa truly claims this millennium” (Nkuhlu 2004).

7.1.1. Preconditions

- Political Governance Initiative:
 - Declaration on democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance; and
 - African Peer Review Mechanism.
- Economic and Corporate Governance Initiative:
 - Good Economic and Corporate Governance;
 - Framework for the Implementation of Banking and Financial Standards; and
 - Money Laundering.

7.1.2. Sectoral priorities

- Agriculture and Market Access Initiative:
 - Agriculture and Market Access; and
 - Market Access.
- Human Resource Development Initiative:
 - Education; and
 - Health.
- Infrastructure Initiative.
- Environment Initiative.

7.2. *Research Focus Areas*

Another example of issues that are deemed important for Africa, in particular, South Africa, is the nine focus areas identified by the South African *National Research Foundation* (NRF):

- Challenge of Globalisation: Perspectives from the Global South;
- Conservation and Management of Ecosystems and Biodiversity;
- Distinct South African Research Opportunities;
- Economic Growth and International Competitiveness;
- Education and the Challenges for Change;

- Indigenous Knowledge Systems;
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the Information Society in South Africa;
- Sustainable Livelihoods: The Eradication of Poverty; and
- Unlocking the Future: Advancing and Strengthening Strategic Knowledge

7.3. *South African White Paper and National Plan for Higher Education*

To stay with South African examples (while admitting that all the issues of importance for South Africa cannot simply be transposed as if all of them are equally important in all other African countries) it is illuminating for the purposes of this paper to take note of the South African government's formulation of the role of higher education in a knowledge-driven world:

- Human resource development: the mobilisation of human talent and potential through lifelong learning to contribute to the social, economic, cultural and intellectual life of a rapidly changing society.
- High-level skills training: the training and provision of person power to strengthen this country's enterprises, services and infrastructure. This requires the development of professionals and knowledge workers with globally equivalent skills, but who are socially responsible and conscious of their role in contributing to the national development effort and social transformation.
- Production, acquisition and application of new knowledge: national growth and competitiveness is dependent on continuous technological improvement and innovation, driven by a well-organised, vibrant research and development system which integrates the research and training capacity of higher education with the needs of industry and of social reconstruction (*White Paper* 1997, par 1.12).

In its *National Plan for Higher Education* the South African Government (2002) elaborated on these roles by identifying a number of goals (with strategic priorities and outcomes for each one) to ensure "that the graduates needed for social and economic development in South Africa will be produced":

1. To provide a full spectrum of advanced educational opportunities for an expanding range of the population irrespective of race, gender, age, creed or class or other forms of discrimination.
2. To promote equity of access and fair chances for success to all who are seeking to realise their potential through higher education, while eradicating all forms of unfair discrimination and advancing redress for past inequalities.
3. To diversify the system in terms of the mix of institutional missions and programmes that will be required to meet national and regional needs in social, cultural and economic development.
4. To secure and advance high-level research capacity which can ensure both the continuation of self-initiated, open-ended intellectual inquiry, and the sustained application of research activities to technological improvement and social development.
5. To build new institutional and organisational forms and new institutional identities and cultures as integral components of a single co-ordinated national higher education system.

In conclusion, then, four comments on how the study of the New Testament in an “africanised” African university can relate to these issues and problems.

8. The study of the New Testament in Africa in africanised universities

1. It is too simplistic and too narrow to limit the scope of the study of the NT in African universities to the handful sections in the NT which refer explicitly to people or events on the African context in ancient times (imagine the overwhelming amount of research the Ethiopian eunuch will have to endure). Although it may be of some interest for NT Studies in African universities to (continue to) do this kind of investigation, it can certainly not be all that African NT scholars can do.
2. In a recent report the *Organization of European Economic Development* (OECD) explains the notion of “an engaged university”—that is, a university which takes the needs and problems of the “world out there” as points of departure for (some/many of) its research programmes (OECD 2003). Also well known is Gibbons’ notion of “Mode Two” of knowledge production and dissemination, char-

acterized by the fact that research and teaching are “no longer self-contained activities, carried out in relative institutional isolation”. Rather, it takes place in a context of application and the production of “socially robust knowledge” requires inter-disciplinary work, heterogeneous skills, flat hierarchies, flexibility to adapt to continuous changes and a broad context of quality assurance (cf. Gibbons et al. 1994; Gibbons 1999). Given this background, the investigation of those themes and/or stories in the NT taken to be relevant to one or more of the issues of importance for Africa today (as indicated in the previous section) will possibly continue to form part of the scope of NT Studies in African universities. However, such an approach may quite easily lead to anachronistic interpretations. University level research and teaching obviously require methodological sophistication beyond anachronistic simplifications. To limit our view of the possible role of NT Studies in African universities to this type of perceived “engaged” activities, is, although possibly important and valuable, to my mind also too narrow and quite possibly too simplistic.

3. On a more fundamental level I suggest that the inclusion of NT Studies in the general education of some of the students at research universities, can make a contribution to educate these graduates to be leaders who
 - “can think and write clearly, effectively, and critically, and who can communicate with precision, cogency, and force;
 - has a critical appreciation of the ways in which we gain knowledge and understanding of the universe, of society, and of ourselves;
 - has a broad knowledge of other cultures and other times, and is able to take decisions based on reference to the wider world and to the historical forces that have shaped it;
 - has some understanding of and experience in thinking systematically about moral and ethical problems; and
 - has achieved depth in some field of knowledge” (The World Bank 2002).
4. Higher education in the humanities is home to the most careful reasoning about the ethical and moral values important to that society. “It joins the other disciplines in its respect for objectivity,

for testing ideas against observation—*with the experience of all societies, across history, to draw upon*” (The World Bank 2000, 62; my italics). NT Studies provide opportunities to study certain societies of ancient times and by doing that NT scholars can make important contributions to African universities. It is not surprising that the World Bank (2000; 2002) emphasizes the crucial importance of the humanities in universities of developing countries as indispensable for the development of these countries.

The study of ancient societies and ancient texts at university level and in university context can indeed contribute in meaningful ways to produce leaders able to grapple with the challenges facing the African continent.

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THE CHALLENGE OF CULTURAL JUSTICE UNDER
CONDITIONS OF GLOBALISATION:
IS THE NEW TESTAMENT OF ANY USE?¹

Piet J. Naudé

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that globalization as a powerful homogenizing force poses two ethical challenges: the challenge of establishing a competing cosmological story that shapes identity and value-formation and the challenge of cultural justice related to community-in-diversity and the freedom of unselfconscious living. The NT texts on the Lordship of Christ and the church as moral community are indeed “useful” and provide interesting clues on how to establish greater cultural justice in a global world.

1. *Globalisation as cultural force of identity transformation*

The predominant focus of ecumenical literature² on globalisation is the ethical and theological challenges related to the impact of a globalising *market economy*. An emerging theme—and the focus of this paper—is the issue of globalisation as a powerful *cultural force*, shaping personal and national identities, social cohesion and human coherence “. . . at the intersection of transnational forces, cross-cutting the local and the global” (Chidester 2003, vii). Whereas the economic face of globalisation calls forth issues related to distributive justice,

¹ I dedicate this paper to Bernard Lategan, eminent South African New Testament scholar, who taught me the meaning of hermeneutics and whose pursuit of justice in difficult times served as inspiration to many. Secs. 1 and 2 of this paper represent part of a project on cultural justice in the realms of systematic theology, ethics, and higher education studies.

² The pool of literature is too large to list here. For a summary of statements up to about 1990, see Van den Berg (1990). See also *Christian Faith and World Economy Today* (Geneva: WCC, 1992); articles on “technology” and “culture” in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*; De Santa Ana (1998); and *The Ecumenical Review* 52(2), 2000 that was devoted to “economic globalisation”.

the cultural-technological face calls forth issues related to cultural, aesthetic justice and identity formation (see Kwenda 2003).

There are as many definitions of culture³ as there are social scientists. For the sake of our discussion here, two notions of culture will be put forward. The first is by Clifford Geertz who espouses a semiotic view based on his interpretation that “man (*sic*) is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun (and) I take culture to be those webs”. Culture is therefore an “interworked system of construable symbols” in which social events can be intelligibly described (Geertz 1975, 5, 14). These symbols form—through their inter-relation—a cultural map within which people negotiate their identities. In a recent publication on social cohesion, Chirevo Kwenda takes a shorter route and sees culture merely as “our way of life” and “what people take for granted”. In other words: “It is that comfort zone within, and out of which, we think, act and speak. If it is our ‘mother culture’, we do all these things without having to be self-conscious about what we are doing” (Kwenda 2003, 68, 69).

Both culture and identity are fluid and hybrid notions: on an individual level, we live in overlapping social territories and migrate amongst different social roles constructed on the basis of who we are and who we are becoming. On a group- or national level, this is equally true: cultures and identities are constantly negotiated between “what is taken for granted”, between what is an assumed network of significance, and a changing environment that might seek to disarrange our symbolic cultural maps.

In an ideal world, such identity negotiations may occur peacefully, in a symmetry of power, and over an extended period, so that natural assimilation and hybridisation enrich this “meeting of cultures” and evolving of identities. However, we have ample examples

³ I am not an expert in anthropology or cultural studies, but have found the following sources very helpful (without fully integrating them into this paper): During (1993) is an excellent collection of groundbreaking essays by authors like Adorno and Horkheimer, Barthes, Foucault, Lyotard, Cornel West and others. See specifically part IV in its relevance for this paper. The somewhat older collection by Gamst and Norbeck (1976) has a strong sociological focus with contributions by *inter alia* Durkheim, Parsons and Malinowski. Gannon (1994) develops an interesting analytical instrument, namely significant social actions as metaphors for analysing local and global cultures. See chapter 16 on the Nigerian marketplace for an example from the African continent. I am deeply aware of my limitations in this exciting field of study.

in history and the contemporary world that such processes more than often derail. "We know that for these four words, 'our way of life', people are often prepared to kill or be killed. In such instances, it becomes clear that there is a very small step from 'a way of life' to life itself. Thus, a threat to a people's culture tends to be perceived and experienced as a personal threat" (Kwenda 2003, 68).

The dichotomies represented by Jewish versus Palestinian, Hutsis versus Tutsis, Catholic versus Protestant; Serbian versus Croatian, America versus Islamic fundamentalists are the violent results of derailed identity negotiation coupled with cultural acts of threats and resistance. There are also less violent, but nevertheless intense processes of interchange by Nigerians in France, Turks in Germany, Mozambiquens in South Africa, Aborigines in Australia and Hispanics and Chinese in America (and the list can go on and on).

These regional cultural negotiations are both intensified and mon-dialised (*le monde*: French) by the Janus face of cultural globalization. Like all globalisation processes, this one is equally ambiguous and even contradictory: *the globalisation of culture is one the hand a huge homogenization process, whilst at the same time fostering a celebration of cultural difference and fragmentation.*

Related to the latter, one may point to the hybridization of culture as "a global phenomenon that happens locally" through interesting cultural mixes of music, art, literature and architecture. For example, the post-colonial discourse on "creolization", ambivalence and multiple identities, is a way of "writing-back" in response to a hegemonic global culture (see Gerle 2000, 159) and related to a process of identity transformation.

But the romantic idea of multi-culturalism is betrayed by a globalising process that creates a mirage of differentiation, but in fact is an encompassing force toward *Vereinheitlichung*⁴ (Raiser 1999, 37). This creates a depersonalised mass society typified by "mass communications, mass consumption, homogeneity of patterns of life, mass culture" (De Santa Ana 1998, 14). The process is driven by mega

⁴ Raiser (1999, 32ff.) points out three central challenges for the ecumenical church in the 21st century: a life-centered vision (*lebenszentrierte Vision*) to replace a destructive anthropocentrism; the acknowledgement of plurality, and facing the inner contradictions of globalisation. He verbalises one of these contradictions as the simultaneous process of "Vereinheitlichung von Lebensstilen und kulturellen Formen" and the "Anstrengungen" caused by a defence of "einheimische Kulturen, religiöse Traditionen (und) ethnische und rassische Identitäten" (1999, 37).

cultural firms “. . . based on the commodification of Anglophone culture with the aid of the electronic highway” (Louw 2002, 79). Here the economic, technological and cultural intersect in a deadly asymmetrical negotiation: “You can survive, even thrive, among us, if you become like us; you can keep your life, if you give up your identity”. With reference to Levi-Strauss, “we can say that exclusion by assimilation rests on a deal: we will refrain from vomiting you out (anthropoemic strategy) if you let us swallow you up (anthropophagic strategy)” (Volf 1996, 75).

Globalisation—seen in this way—acquires an ideological nature as *la pensee unique*, aspiring to be the only valid view, “. . . imposing itself as the paradigm to which all other cultures should be adjusted” (De Santa Ana 1998, 16). Where previous forms of cultural subjugation were spatially confined and time-bound, the commercial homogeneity of a consumerist culture expands itself with the aid of the newest and fastest technological communication (itself an ambiguous blessing in the 21st century!).

2. *The ethical issues*

What is the ethical issue?, one might ask. In the ebb and flow of history, many cultures and civilizations have come and gone. Globalization is just a new and more potent cultural force that speeds up this process of assimilation, subjugation and eventual extinction. The museumization of “indigenous” cultures of yesteryear is but the same as fossils and mummies kept for the (possible?) attention and curiosity of future generations.

It is not that simple, though. Enough work has been done on the ethical issues related to the casino economy⁵ of digital capitalism. In this paper, I wish to argue the case for *cultural justice* and outline the ethical issues in the following two broad themes: first, the moral significance of cosmological stories in shaping identity and values; second the unequal burden of suspending or surrendering “what is taken for granted”.

⁵ “Like any casino, this global game is rigged so that only the house wins”. Fidel Castro in a speech to the South African parliament. See Chidester (2003, 10).

2.1. *Cosmological stories and narrative moral identity*

Let us accept with Peter Berger (1967, 152ff.), Ninian Smart (1973), and David Tracy (1981, 159) that the role of religion is to construct a comprehensive view of the world by framing parts of reality in the context of that which transcends reality (i.e. ultimate reality). Let us accept with Larry Rasmussen that “we are incorrigibly storytellers” (1994, 178) and concur with Thomas Berry that religious cosmologies are designed to answer identity questions like: Who am I? Who are we? Where are we going? “For peoples, generally, their story of the universe and the human role in the universe is their primary source of intelligibility and value” (1998, xi).

On these assumptions one could argue that globalisation in its cultural garb usurps and misplaces the role of religion by constituting its own cosmological narrative. What is at stake is not merely the physics of our information age, but its metaphysics, “. . . its significance to individual and social morality . . . and its consequences for the formation, maintenance and alteration of personal identity” (Arthur 1998, 3; Smit 2000, 15). Homogenization takes on the proportions of an autonomous force governing the lives of individuals and communities (De Santa Ana 1998, 19).

To a certain extent globalisation as encompassing cosmology reflects the moral tendencies of both modernity and postmodernity. According to Zygmunt Bauman, globalisation—as autonomous force against which you apparently can do nothing but to be swept along—does “shift moral responsibilities away from the moral self, either toward a socially constructed and managed supra-individual agency, or through floating responsibility inside a bureaucratic ‘rule of nobody’” (Bauman 1995, 99; see Volf 1996, 21ff.). However, like postmodernity, globalisation creates a climate of evasion of moral responsibilities by rendering relationships “fragmentary” and “discontinuous” (or should we say “virtual?”), resulting in disengagement and commitment-avoidance (Bauman 1995, 156).

We have learnt from various forms of narrative ethics (from Richard H. Niebuhr to Stanley Hauerwas): *agere sequitur esse*. What we do, is a result of who we are. And who we are, is determined by the narrative communities in which we are formed. From a moral perspective “it is possible to argue that the real challenges embedded in globalisation concern not so much what we *do*, but who we *are*, who we are becoming . . .” (Smit 2000, 15, emphasis original).

The mass culture of a globalising world is a powerful narrative agent that contributes significantly to moral formation. Its values become *the* values, the way things *are*; the way *everybody* acts.

This analysis might provide some clue to the vexing question: why do societies in rapid transition (e.g. from so-called non-Western cultures—be they Islamic, African or Eastern European—to being “Westernised”) so often exhibit a partial or total value-collapse? The answer might be that societies in transition *undergo a collective identity crisis as they move from the known to the “not yet”*. *It is because they cannot yet adequately answer the question “who are we?” that they are unable to exercise responsible and virtuous options.*⁶ In a situation of transition a “contraction of time” appears that instinctively cuts off the past (nobody wants to return to an oppressive past), but cannot yet conceptualise the future (“a journey into uncharted territory without safety equipment”⁷). In this way life is a continual “collapsed present”, driven by emotional, physical and economic survival in which clear moral ideals and ethical visions are difficult to uphold.

It is into this situation of confusion and *anomie*⁸ where people find themselves “in between stories”⁹ and in a situation of *Heimatlosigkeit*,¹⁰

⁶ Two distinguishing features of societies in transition are a marked increase in socio-economic inequality, and a massive rise in violence and criminality. This is true of countries as diverse as Russia and South Africa. In the latter case, the new government resorted to a moratorium on the release of police statistics in a desperate bid to restrain the images of a “violent” new democracy. See Addy and Silny (2001, 505) who state that in some cases Eastern European areas experienced a 400% rise in criminality over a ten year period.

⁷ A quotation from Addy and Silny (2001, 503) to describe the transitions in Eastern Europe.

⁸ This term stems from Emile Durkheim in his groundbreaking study on social cohesion and suicide: “When society is disturbed by some painful crisis or by beneficent but abrupt transitions, the collective conscience is momentarily incapable of exercising restraint. Time is required for the public conscience to reclassify men (*sic*) and things. So long as social forces thus freed have not regained equilibrium, their respective values are unknown and so all regulation is lacking for a time. The state of de-regulation or *anomie* is heightened by passions being less disciplined precisely when they need more disciplining” (1951, 252–253).

⁹ “It’s all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories.” Previously, with the old story (whether my own or the clear story of an oppressive regime) “we awoke in the morning and knew where we were. We could answer the questions of our children. We could identify crime, punish transgressors. Everything was taken care of because the story was there . . .” (Berry 1988, 123).

¹⁰ See Fischer’s discussion in a different context of how the mode of knowledge emanating from the Enlightenment enabled humankind to make the world so habitable, so transparent, that it exactly loses its character as *Heimat*. “Der ärgste Feind

that the globalised consumer culture steps to provide a viable alternative; “the only answer”; *the* moral story. It works so well because consumerism exactly sustains itself by creating constantly changing demands that have to be satisfied instantly, thereby *creating an ever-shifting “hedonistic presence”*, closed to both the past and the future.

The notion that what Africa (or Eastern Europe or Latin America or Iraq and Afghanistan) need is more development aid and physical infrastructure—however important—is fatally flawed and may in practice result in the intensification of resistance and loss of hope in “democracy”. What needs to be restored and cultivated is a culturally mediated reconstruction of the self in a personal and collective sense. In political terms, the African Renaissance for example is as much about economic development as it is about a post-colonial restoration of cultural pride and selfhood “. . . to counter the excesses of European modes of being-in-the-world” (Comaroff 2000, 80).

The crucial insight—missed by most development agencies—is that restoration of being not only precedes economic restoration, but also—at least in an African situation—is *the precondition* for economic survival. Being precedes bread (Balcomb 1998, 71). Why? Because in a situation of scarce resources, you need a view of identity that resists economic greed and self-referential individualism. *What you require is a notion of identity as identity-in-community, which undergirds redistribution patterns, which in turn guarantee physical and economic survival. You need the survival of (the) community instead of the survival of the fittest.*

But then you need a cosmological story and other local narratives to sustain exactly such communities in which moral formation can take shape. If not, globalisation in the name of “development aid” will do the job for you.

Perhaps the following case study—based on actual events—conveys this journey of identity and life “in between stories” in a way that arguments are unable to do:

My brother Sipho and I grew up in a rural village in the Limpopo province of South Africa. My father was a farm labourer and my mother a domestic worker. They were both functionally illiterate, but had a keen sense that the education of their children was of paramount importance. By the time we reached high school age, the whole

der Verantwortung ist die Gleichgültigkeit. Gleichgültigkeit aber ist die Folge *existentieller Heimatlosigkeit*” (my emphasis). He then pleads for a process of *Beheimatung* to restore responsibility (Fischer 1992, 124).

extended family contributed to send the two of us (one year apart) to a former model C school in Pretoria. After matriculation, we both attended university—again with the material and emotional support of the family. This support was not so much a contractual than a familial, moral issue. It was is a form of “donation” that everybody tacitly knew would one day return—though in no exact manner like in written contracts—to assist parents in their old age and make the same possible for other siblings after us.

The eventual graduation festivals were huge family affairs with praise singers, *pap* and slaughtering of goats.

We both were excited to land our first jobs—I with my degree in humanities in the academic administration of the university in Port Elizabeth; Siphso with his B Comm at an international consulting firm in Johannesburg. We never openly spoke, but took it for granted that we send a monthly amount “back home”, and visit at least once a year.

After about 18 months, Siphso’s contributions dried up. The next year he did not return for his annual visit. What is more: when my grandfather passed away, he did not attend the funeral. I took the courage to talk this over with him and soon realised that he had embraced the yuppie life-style of Egoli, the *City of Gold*: designer clothes (from *Carducci* to *Billabong* and *Man about Town*), a red BMW 318i and a townhouse in Fourways.

He now traverses a different world. He has embraced different values. We feel not so much a sense of betrayal, but of sadness to have lost him. He has become a different person. Though, in the eyes of most, he is a highly successful person; a sign that the new South Africa is really opening opportunities to create a new black middle class.

And I am not sure that he would ever want to return to our village. Due to its location in the mountains, it is called *Tshilapfene*, “the place of the baboons”.

2.2. *Surrendering what is taken for granted*

In a perceptive essay referred to several times above, historian of religion, Chirevo Kwenda (2003, 70), explains the notion of cultural (in)justice as follows:

Where people live by what they naturally take for granted, or where the details of everyday life coincide with what is taken for granted, we can say there is cultural justice—at least in this limited sense of freedom from constant self-consciousness about every little thing. Cultural injustice occurs when some people are forced, by coercion or persuasion, to submit to the burdensome condition of suspending—or more

permanently surrendering—what they naturally take for granted, and then begin to depend on what someone else takes for granted. The reality is that substitution of what is taken for granted is seldom adequate. This means that, in reality, the subjugated person has no linguistic or cultural “default drive”, that critical minimum of ways, customs, manners, gestures and postures that facilitate uninhibited, unselfconscious action.

The injustice lies in the unequal burden and stress of constant self-consciousness that millions of people carry on behalf of others without gaining recognition or respect. In fact, they are objects of further subjugation and humiliation that vary from physical violence to subtle body language that clearly communicate that you are stupid and do not know “the ways things are done or said here”.

On a regional and national level, these forms of exclusions (Miroslav Volf reminds us) range from domination and indifference to abandonment and ultimately elimination. From the “inside” this exclusion results from being “... uncomfortable with anything that blurs accepted boundaries, disturbs our identities, and disarranges our symbolic cultural maps”.¹¹

The “fall of the Berlin wall” or “end of the *apartheid* regime” are designations of many societies that moved from oppressive political systems to greater civil liberties after 1989. What is sometimes underestimated, is the massive identity renegotiation processes in the “post-liberation” period, often leading to an upsurge in ethnic violence and loss of social stability. As we saw in the previous section, questions of culture and life-in-community then arise with great urgency. Because it takes tremendous courage and political wisdom to (for the first time?) assert “what we take for granted” and to act unself-consciously after decades of identity suspension and suppression.

Shortly after the first democratic elections in South Africa that ended 46 years of minority rule, African theologian Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, made the following incisive observation:

Issues of culture are again acquiring a new form of prominence in various spheres of South African society. *It is as if we can, at last, speak truly and honestly, about our culture.* This is due to the widespread feeling

¹¹ Volf (1996, 78). Note the interesting debate about the wearing of Muslim head scarves in European schools, as well as the heated debate about “European identity” in the light of Turkey’s possible entrance into the EU. Talk about disarranging cultural maps!

that now, more than at any other time, *we can be subjects of our own cultural destiny*. . . . The reconstruction of structures and physical development alone will not quench our *cultural and spiritual thirst*. On the contrary, the heavy emphasis on the material and the structural may simply result in the intensification of black frustration. We do not just need jobs and houses, *we must recover our own selves* (Maluleke in Balcomb 1998, 70; my emphases).

Whereas the struggle against *apartheid* or communism or imperialism or Americanism forced and still forces a kind of uniformity of resistance, and is aimed at *the right to be "the same"*, the post-liberation struggle aims at a restored subjectivity and agency with *the right to be different*. In the ethical terms of this section: *the right to live unself-consciously*.

This has been echoed three years later from a different perspective by Miroslav Volf:

In recent decades, the *issue of identity* has risen to the forefront of discussions in social philosophy. If the liberation movements of the sixties were all about equality—above all gender equality and race equality—major concerns in the nineties seem to be about identity—about the *recognition of distinct identities* of persons who differ in gender, skin color, or culture (Volf 1998, 23; my emphasis).

Let us make this argument about culture and distinct identities more concrete. I found it quite remarkable to see how much emphasis is placed on *language* in the process of identity re-negotiation.

On a first level, language itself plays this exclusivist role. To this I will turn in the next paragraph. On a second level, a "language of exclusion" is created by naming or labelling the other in a manner that takes the other outside "the class of objects of potential moral responsibility" (Zygmunt Bauman as quoted by Volf 1996, 76). This does not only justify exclusion, but in fact necessitates it. "The rhetoric of the other's inhumanity *obliges* the self to practice inhumanity" (Volf 1996, 76; original emphasis). Like supporters of the linguistic turn, one could state that exclusion is equally language-saturated. Words do kill.

But in a more subtle way, language itself—as in "mother-tongue" and "foreign" language—plays an exclusionary role. In a remarkable essay, "Aria: A Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood", Richard Rodriguez recounts how he grew up in Sacramento, California, in a Mexican immigrant home in a predominantly white suburb. During his first few years in school, he struggled with English, but managed

to move between the language of the public (English) and the private language of the home (Spanish). "Like others who feel the pain of public alienation, we transformed the knowledge of our public separateness into a consoling reminder of our intimacy" (Rodriguez 1982, 23). He eloquently spells out life in two linguistic and social worlds:

But then there was Spanish: *español*, the language rarely heard away from house, the language which seemed to me therefore a private language, my family's language. To hear its sounds was to feel myself specially recognised as one of the family, apart from *los otros* (the others). A simple remark, an inconsequential comment could convey that assurance. My parents would say something to me and I would feel embraced by the sounds of their words. Those sounds said: I am speaking with ease in Spanish. . . . I recognise you as somebody special, close, like no one outside. You belong with us. In the family. Ricardo (Rodriguez 1982, 22–23).

But this juxtaposition of a double identity was shattered by a simple request from the teachers (nuns at the Catholic school) that, in order to improve their academic performance, English should be spoken at home. This led to an ambivalent outcome: a growing confidence in public, but a devastating silence at home:

There was a new silence at home. As we children learned more and more English, we shared fewer and fewer words with our parents. Sentences needed to be spoken slowly. . . . Often the parent wouldn't understand. The child would need to repeat himself. Still the parent misunderstood. The young voice, frustrated, would end up saying, "Never mind"—the subject was closed. Dinners would be noisy with the clinking of knives and forks against dishes. My mother would smile softly between her remarks; my father, at the other end of the table, would chew and chew his food while he stared over the heads of his children (1982, 25).

What followed was first a "disconcerting confusion" (29). Then, as fluency in Spanish faded fast, a feeling of guilt arose over the betrayal of immediate family and visitors from Mexico (30). Thereafter followed an understanding that the linguistic change was a social one where the intimacy at home was traded for the gain of fluency and acceptance in the public language. "I moved easily at last, a citizen in a crowded city of words" (31).

However, the ambiguities remain. This is evident from the end of the essay where Rodriguez describes the funeral of his grandmother:

When I went up to look at my grandmother, I saw her through the haze of a veil draped over the open lid of the casket. Her face looked calm—but distant and unyielding to love. It was not the face I remembered seeing most often. It was the face she made in public when a clerk at Safeway asked her some question and I would need to respond. It was her public face that the mortician had designed with his dubious art (35).

It was—in the terms set out above—the burdensome face of someone who constantly had to surrender what is taken for granted. You can keep your life, if you give up your identity. You can keep your culture, as long as you hold its values and customs, its “things taken for granted”, with diffidence. This cultural diffidence is a disposition that causes people either to be ashamed of their culture or to simply ignore it as irrelevant in the modern world (see Kwenda 2003, 71).

These powerful images from a single life and immigrant family is a metaphor, a simile, a parable of national and trans-national processes of cultural injustice. In *The Political Economy of Transition* Tony Addy and Jiri Silny (2001) reflects on the changes that occurred in the ten years from 1989–1999 in Central and Eastern Europe. They make the interesting observation that the “market Bolsheviks” (economic advisors who advocated the move to a full market economy in one jump) not only harboured a blind faith in policy prescriptions from “the West” to be applied unaltered to “the East”, but also showed “little respect for indigenous knowledge and practice” (2001, 503). The rapid privatisation of former industries was carried out “in a way which did not respect positive cultural and ethical values within the region. Under conditions of globalisation, the process tended to block creative responses” (2001, 505).

In a bizarre example of exclusion by elimination (Volf), the application of rigid market rules meant the literal closure of what Addy and Silny call “cultural industries”: “For example, rich traditions of film-making were lost and historic theatres, orchestras and other artistic companies were decimated. It would take a great deal of time and money to rebuild such industries and cultural assets” (2001, 505).

Would it therefore be justified to include *aesthetic justice*¹² as an integral part of cultural justice? I think so, because the symbols of national

¹² This process of being subject to the aesthetics of “the other” is a vivid reality in the lucrative global tourism industry. See the illuminating analysis done by

identity (statutes, flags, books, artefacts, photographs, histories and language) are normally the first spoils of war. The subjugation of the other is completed with the removal or destruction of identity-confirming symbols. And in the context of globalisation, this war is mostly fought without military armours, in a faceless silence, and in the name of advancement.

3. *Globalisation and cultural justice: A few NT perspectives*

I have argued that globalisation as a cultural force poses two ethical challenges: first, the challenge of a competing cosmological story with its effect on identity and value-formation. Second: the challenge of cultural justice with its effect on community-in-diversity and the freedom of an unselfconscious life. A full NT ethical response is not possible in the confines of this paper. What follow, are a few suggestions drawn from select passages¹³ that may provide some direction to these challenges.

3.1. *Globalisation: The challenge of who is Lord*

By constituting a cosmological narrative and providing *the* alternative normative “story”, globalisation enters the age-old realm of the battle of the gods; the battle for ultimate loyalty; for the ultimate frame of reference from which to interpret the self and life-in-community.

It is common knowledge that the period reflected in NT writings was dominated by two forces:¹⁴ the residual influence of Hellenistic culture and Roman political rule since the occupation of Palestine in 63 BCE and its incorporation into the province of Syria. I only follow up on the issue of Roman political authority here:

Although Roman rule allowed relative local religious freedom to occupied territories, its growing usurpation of religious power (in a time that has not yet seen the modernist division of life spheres),

Sandra Kloppe in which she highlights the marginalisation effect on local communities of turning the City Bowl area in Cape Town into an international tourist destination (Kloppe 2003, 224ff.).

¹³ All references below are to the NIV.

¹⁴ See the very simple but informative discussion in Roetz (1985, 1–23).

brought local Christian communities into growing conflict with the Roman state. There is no room here for an extensive treatment of a complex¹⁵ topic. For the sake of my overall argument, I refer to three NT passages to illustrate what became a battle for ultimate loyalty, and for the guiding orientation point in constructing a moral identity and community:

First, in Mark 12:13–17, the sensitive question of imperial tax is of great religious significance. The dinarius, for which Jesus asks, referred clearly to the emperor's apotheosis: the laurel wreath symbolized divinity, reinforced by the inscription "Emperor Tiberius, venerated son of the venerated God and high priest". The pericope reaches its climax in what can be read as an ironic parallelism or perhaps even as an antithesis: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Jesus does here-with not contest the legitimacy of the state, nor does he denigrate what belongs to Caesar. But, in a time of the total interpenetration of politics and religion, this saying "effectively secularizes civil authority and removes it from the realm of ideology" (Schrage 1988, 113).

Second, the well-known (and often misused¹⁶) Pauline passage in Rom 13:1–7 forms part of the paraenetic section that is introduced in chapter 12:1–2. The former could be read as the public practice of love—a theme followed through from 12:21 to 13:11–14. The significance of this passage for my argument here does not lie in a (futile?) reconstruction of a "doctrine of the state", but the clarity and apparent ease with which Paul shifts the origin of state power from the gods (however perceived) to the Christian God. "There is no power [ἐξουσία] that is not from God [ὑπὸ θεοῦ]" in 13:1 can therefore be construed as implicit critique of a self-divinized authority that later required the confession that Caesar is lord.

¹⁵ There is—like with most "topics" in the New Testament—a wide variety of witnesses to the relation between faith community and the state. See the clearly apologetic nature of Lukan views in the Gospel of Luke and Acts; the sayings attributed to Jesus; the varied responses in the Pauline corpus; and the obviously radical opposition expressed in Revelations. For cursory discussions and further literature, see Schrage (1988, 107ff., 157ff., 235ff. and 342ff.).

¹⁶ In South Africa's recent history this passage was a the subject of severe hermeneutical struggle between those who cited this in support of subordination to the *apartheid* government that claimed to be Christian and thus worthy of support, and those who (in 1985) called to a prayer for the fall of the government exactly because it did not fulfil the "criteria" for a godly government put forward in this passage.

Thirdly, by the time that the Apocalypse was written—specifically Revelation 13—the emperor cult had been established and vigorously enforced as state religion.¹⁷ Here the Roman empire (by now established as *imperium* in the technical sense of the word with a uniform supervisory authority over the whole Mediterranean) is described as the incarnation of Satan’s power upon earth, and as caricature of Christ. The issue at stake is ultimate loyalty, the battle of the gods, because the state demands what is appropriate to God and to Christ alone. “In making these demands, the state is from the devil. It is not satanic because it is imperfect, but because it is totalitarian. It does not have too little authority, but too much, authority over ‘every tribe and people and tongue and nation’ (13:7). It is demonic in its *totalitarian deification*” (Schrage 1988, 345; my emphasis).

The political impotence of early Christian communities made only “passive” resistance possible. But the simple confession of Christ’s Lordship was, especially in the Eastern regions of the empire, in fact a public, active political act as it represents—from a Roman perspective—both “atheism” and anarchy. In the face of martyrdom, the faith communities are reminded that God has set a limit to the rule of the dragon (42 months according to 13:5), that they are blessed if they die in the Lord (14:13) as their names are entered in the book of life (13:8).

Although there were varied responses in the NT to the growing totalitarianism of an encompassing global empire, there is enough textual evidence to state at least the following: as moral communities,¹⁸ the early Christians were confronted with the question of what will serve as ultimate reference point, as principle in the narrative, symbolic arrangement of the Christian life. They simply chose the person of Jesus, confessed as *kurios*, and derived direction from their memories of him, against the deified, global power of the day.

The conclusion is clear: insofar and where globalisation assumes the character of a religion, it needs to be resisted, confronted, and where possible transformed with a “Christ-centered” ethics. The

¹⁷ See for example Domitian who claimed the divine honours of *dominus ac deus*.

¹⁸ See the recent attempt by Allen Verhey (2002) to reconstruct a NT ethics on the basis of the early church as a remembering and instructing community. He takes Rom 15:14 as point of departure and aligns himself with eminent ethicists like James Gustafson, Larry Rasmussen and (the more controversial) Stanley Hauerwas to develop the idea of early churches as communities of moral discourse.

implication for the people of God is a renewed vision of Christ's Lordship as constitutive for their very existence as a community, and as identity-confirming narrative in times of change and transition. Where loyalties shift to other gods, or where the cosmic pre-eminence of Christ is compromised,¹⁹ or where the "gospel of Jesus Christ" is no longer faithfully transmitted in word, liturgy and (especially) a life *coram Dei*, identity and moral orientation is lost. Into this vacuum so-called "global values" step as alternative moral and identity-forming story.

3.2. Globalisation: A challenge to households of life-in-communion

Challenged by the processes of globalisation, a very important reinterpretation of *oikoumene* (the whole of the habitable earth) and *oikodome* (building up of community) occurred in ecumenical circles. This came about as the former ethical concerns of Life and Work ("ethics") and ecclesial concerns of Faith and Order ("church unity") converged in a number of studies²⁰ that emphasise that the core challenge of globalisation is the nature of the household or households we create and belong to.

Whereas the first ethical challenge above relates to the sovereignty of God (and concomitant moral claim of God on our lives through Christ), the second relates to the type of communities we build amidst the claim that we now live in a "global village".²¹

¹⁹ See the clear "cosmic" bias of passages like the prologue to John, the exaltation in Eph 1:3–14, the hymnal in Col 1:15–20 and the depiction of the cross as cosmic battle in Col 2:6–15.

²⁰ See for example the publications and later comments related to the well-known "three costlies" emanating from three conferences: costly unity (Ronde, Denmark 1993), costly commitment (Jerusalem 1994) and costly obedience (Johannesburg 1996). The three final statements were published in 1997 as *Ecclesiology and Ethics* edited by Thomas Best and Martin Robra. "The titles (of the three consultations) reflect a progression of ecclesiological reflection and deepening of moral concern: from realising that 'the unity we seek' will turn out to be *costly unity*; through recognizing that 'a *costly unity* requires *costly commitment* to one another' as Christians and as churches: to admitting that it is, finally, not a matter of programmes and institutions, even ecumenical ones, but of a *costly obedience* to our calling to be one and, as one body of Christ, to serve all humanity and creation" (Best and Robra 1997, ix; original emphases).

²¹ The notion of a "global village" is deeply ambiguous: on the one hand it depicts the reality of a shrunk world through global communication and virtual closeness like you would find in the traditional rural village; on the other hand this village is highly exclusionary (think of the digital divide!) with false senses of belonging, and imbued with asymmetrical power relations.

This is expressed in no uncertain terms by the Johannesburg delegation (see footnote 20):

Moral issues, formerly seen as having to do mainly with personal conduct within stable orders of value, have now become radicalized. They now have to do with life, or the death, of human beings and of the created order in which we live. *Before we can even speak of a 21st century "global civilization" life together on this planet will need shared visions and institutional expressions for which we have few really relevant precedents.* As Christians, we speak of an *oikoumene*, or inclusive horizon of human belonging, offered by God in Jesus Christ to the human race. Following the scriptures, we call this a "household of life", a "heavenly city" where justice, peace and care for creation's integrity prevail (Best and Robra 1997, 51–52; my emphasis).

This moves the focus to ecclesiology: the challenge is for the church to be one such "precedent" or "institutional expression" of a life-centred spirituality and ethics (Raiser 1998, 34) and of a moral community known for true *koinonia*. How could the church—in the light of cultural injustice and burden of unselfconscious living—be such a moral community? The answer is deceptively simple: by following Christ.

As the early hymn recounts, Christ did not cling to his nature of being God and did not grasp on to his equality with God, but was humbled in self-donation, even to the death on the cross (Phil 2:5–8). Those who are in Christ consider whatever was to their profit as a loss (Phil 3:7); they are new creations (2 Cor 5:17); they have been crucified with Christ and no longer live, but Christ lives in them (Gal 2:20).

It is only because Christians no longer take their natural identity dead-seriously and find their new consciousness in Christ and his self-donation, that a community of (cultural) justice becomes a possibility. The Pentecost as birth of the church is not without reason described in the book of Acts as an event in which the well-mannered Spirit, in search of cultural justice, enabled a speaking in the diverse known languages of those gathered in Jerusalem!

For our purpose here, and in recognition of Bernard Lategan's work on Galatians, let us examine the view expressed in Gal 3:26–29: In the context of the argument that faith in Christ liberates from the curse of the law, the writer nevertheless accentuates the permanence of the promise to Abraham, fulfilled in Christ.²² Through faith,

²² As can be expected, and following the context of this passage, Luther in his

Jews and Gentiles are now sons of God. Through baptism, all have been clothed with Christ. Therefore: "There is neither Jew nor Greek; slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring [σπέρμα], heirs according to promise."

This "egalitarian" view of the religious community corresponds in a contradictory manner to Jewish formulae in which the threefold distinction is upheld by men who thank God for not being a Gentile, slave or woman. This is not so much rooted in "discrimination" as understood today, as in the disqualification from religious privileges that were open to free Jewish males. Whether this passage is a remnant of Thales (6th century BCE, see Bruce 1982, 187), derives from fanatical circles (Schrage) or is a fragment of an early baptismal formula (Scroggs), it remains a powerful witness to a community that enables what was described as "cultural justice" above: This community both transcends cultural, economic and gender identities and simultaneously affirms these identities in a manner that enhances unity and avoid the "-isms" of ideology and exclusion.

That this had tremendous social implications at the time, is evident from NT witnesses to the struggle with regard to circumcision for Gentile converts (Gal 2; Acts 15); the contradictory position of women in the early church (Acts 2; 1 Cor 11), and the status of slaves after their conversion (e.g. Onesimus in Phlm 16). That it has and—wherever realised—will have tremendous social significance as "precedent" community in a global world today, is certain.²³

We can therefore conclude that, theologically speaking, cultural justice is not so much the result of re-claiming minority or indigenous rights, as the vision of a Christ-like household "... where fully realized human identities and values, far from being forgotten, meet in search of graciously shared abundance of life. This household welcomes all the different human cultures, identities, and interests, including our own" (Mudge 1998, 140).

commentary places heavy emphasis on the social implication of justification by faith alone: "Wie in Christus kein Ansehen der Person für die jüdische Richtung gilt, so gilt in ihm auch sonst kein Ansehen der Person. Es ist ein Zeichen menschlichen und gesetzlichen Gerechtigkeitswesens, dass mann sich spaltet in Sekten und sich unterscheidet nach den Werken" (Luther 1968, 160).

²³ An example of such communities in Africa is the so-called African Independent Churches where tribal, cultural and class distinctions are transcended in communities that represent far more than a mere "religious affiliation" to include economic partnership and holistic healing as well.

This is the vision of the African-rooted Belhar confession,²⁴ borne in a situation of radical cultural injustice; under conditions of pluralism gone wrong; and in the face of a suppressive, homogenising socio-political system. Following the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism about the communion of saints, Belhar believes that, due to Christ's reconciliation, "the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the variety of language and culture, are opportunities to reciprocal service and enrichment in the one visible people of God" (Belhar confession, Statement 2, my translation).

Here we enter the realm of eschatology and even the apocalypse. I close with two magnificent biblical passages where the idea of the household of God extends beyond the people of God and the church to all of creation. These passages—seen in the context of this section—implicitly confirm the "usefulness" of the Scriptures (and specifically the NT) to address the issue of cultural justice in a globalised world.

Under severe depressive spiritual conditions, about 40 years before the fall of Samaria, proto-Isaiah sees the vision of the peaceable kingdom. Divisions and life-threatening enmities based on natural identities (wolf-lamb; leopard-goat; calf-lion) are overcome through a radical transformation of those very identities (lions eat straw and children put hands in the viper's nest). There will be neither harm nor destruction, "... for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (see Isa 11:6–9).

Under conditions of persecution and a seemingly hopeless situation for the second generation Christians, the apostle John sees the vision of a truly global community (truly global and truly in communion) before the throne of God: "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb . . . and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger, never again will they thirst" (Rev 7:9, 15).

²⁴ The confession was adopted in 1986 by the then Dutch Reformed Mission Church after acceptance of the ecumenically endorsed *status confessionis* on *apartheid*. For the English text (original in Afrikaans) and initial explication, see Cloete and Smit (1988).

Whilst we live under the ambiguities of a globalizing world—marvelling at its opportunities, but at the same time despairing at its consequences—we nurture these visions as narratives of a radically other world made possible by the knowledge of the Lord.

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PART FIVE

INTERPRETING THE NEW TESTAMENT
AS LITERATURE

DYADS, TRIADS AND OTHER COMPOSITIONAL BEASTS IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (MATTHEW 5–7)

Johan C. Thom

ABSTRACT

Although some consensus has been reached in recent years about the overall rhetorical composition of the Sermon on the Mount, especially regarding the major divisions of the text, the internal composition of the body of the Sermon remains a heavily debated issue. In a lengthy article recently published in *JBL* Glen H. Stassen suggests that Matt 5:21–7:12 consists of fourteen triads, each containing a traditional teaching, a vicious cycle, and a transforming initiative. While the identification of compositional patterns such as triads on a micro-level is certainly very important for our understanding of the Sermon in its present form, the composition of the Sermon is much more complex and varied than is argued in this article. Triadic structures obviously play a significant role in the Sermon on the Mount, but Stassen's demarcation of the triads is in many instances artificial and obfuscates the natural logic of the argument. It furthermore ignores the role of other equally important compositional patterns such as dyadic and even tetradic structures. Besides giving a critique of Stassen's proposal, my essay analyses examples of compositional patterns in the Sermon of the Mount such as dyads, triads, and tetrads in order to demonstrate how a correct understanding of these patterns not only contributes toward the interpretation of individual verses, but also helps us perceive the connection between verse-clusters.

1. *Introduction*

There is general consensus among scholars that the Sermon on the Mount (SM) has a definite and relatively well-structured composition. Several attempts have been made in recent years to describe this composition in terms of various fairly complex compositional principles, such as Luz's proposal that it has a ring-compositional

structure, centring around the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9–13).¹ Intriguing though such a proposal may be, we should be wary of a too elaborate artistic structure that may only be discerned by means of detailed literary analyses. The most persuasive view in my mind is therefore that the SM follows the general outline of an ancient speech, with an *exordium*, or introduction (5:3–16); a *propositio*, where the topic of the speech is announced (5:17–20); an *argumentatio* which contains the body of the speech (5:21–7:12); and a *peroratio*, with various warnings and exhortations (7:13–27).²

Such a macrocompositional outline still leaves much to be explained on the microlevel of the composition, especially as regards to the internal structure of the body of the SM. Even a cursory reading of the SM shows that the text abounds with numerous forms of compositional patterning, which clearly make an important contribution to the overall meaning of the text. Both the form and function of these patterns remain disputed, however. One of the unfortunate legacies of form and literary criticism is that they tend to focus our attention on the smallest units in a text like the SM, so that we ignore the meaning created in the present text by the stylistic devices of repetition and juxtaposition. My own approach is based on the assumption that form has meaning. By that I mean that formal, stylistic relationships between elements of a text contribute to the semantic relationships within a text. This does not imply, however, that there is a simple and unequivocal relationship between a particular textual structure and its meaning; the form rather provides clues enabling the reader to discover semantic connections between textual elements.³

In this essay, I first give a critique of a recent proposal regarding the internal composition of the body of the SM. The second half

¹ Luz (1989, 211–213). Luz was not the first scholar to propose this; see already Grundmann (1968). Stassen (2003, 300–307) attempts to bring these and other proposals in line with his triadic analysis of the SM.

² Cf. Kennedy (1984, 39–63), Mack (1990, 82–85), and Betz (1992, 50–58; 1995, 50–66), although none of them quite agrees on the divisions within the SM.

³ Much of my own understanding of the compositional principles at work in NT texts may be traced back to the NT discussion group that regularly met in Stellenbosch in the late 1970s and early 1980s to thresh out the intricacies of linguistic, structuralist and literary theories and their possible application to NT studies. Bernard Lategan was a leading member of this group, and I owe many of my insights to these discussions and to Bernard's own work on hermeneutics.

of the essay will be devoted to a detailed discussion of the composition of a pericope to illustrate how literary devices like dyads and triads are used to establish the meaning and coherence of pericopes in the SM.

2. Stassen's Fourteen Triads

In a lengthy article published in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* in 2003 Glen H. Stassen proposes a new interpretation of the body of the SM (Matt 5:21–7:12) that appears to be very similar to what I have in mind, namely, an interpretation based on the repetition of a compositional pattern in the individual pericopes. Stassen contends that the composition of the body of the SM can be described as a series of fourteen triads. Each triad consists of (a) “traditional righteousness”; (b) “the diagnosis of a vicious cycle and its consequence”; and (c) “a transforming initiative that points the way to the deliverance from the vicious cycle”.⁴ An example of such a triad would be Matt 5:21–26. The traditional teaching is found in 5:21, 5:22 contains the vicious cycle, and 5:23–26 the transforming initiative. Stassen furthermore claims that each member of a triad has “fairly precise distinguishing characteristics” which enable us to identify them. He summarises the characteristics as follows:⁵

- (a) The *Traditional Righteousness* is presented as coming from Jewish tradition. It occurs first in a triad, and does not begin with a particle. Its main verb is usually a future indicative or a subjunctive with an imperatival function, as is typical in Matthew for many citations of OT commands; its mood apparently varies with the received traditional teaching.
- (b) The *Vicious Cycle plus judgment* is presented as Jesus' teaching, with authority. It diagnoses a practice and says it leads to judgment. Its main verb is a participle, infinitive, subjunctive, or indicative, but not an imperative. It begins with “but”, “for”, “lest”, or “therefore” (δέ, οὖν, Διὰ [sic] τοῦτο, μήποτε), or a negative such as μή or οὐκ; and often includes λέγω ὑμῖν (“I say to you”).

⁴ Stassen (2003, 268).

⁵ Stassen (2003, 275, Table 1).

- (c) The *Transforming Initiative* is also presented as Jesus' teaching, with authority. Its main verb is a positive imperative—an initiative—not a negative prohibition, calling for a practice of deliverance from the vicious cycle and to participation in the reign of God. It usually begins with *δέ* and ends with a supporting explanation: that is, "he may deliver you to the judge".

Using these criteria, Stassen identifies fourteen triads:

1. On being reconciled (5:21–26: 21, 22, 23–26)
2. On removing the practice that leads to lust (5:27–30: 27, 28, 29–30)
3. On divorce (5:31–32: 31, 32a–b [no Transforming Initiative])
4. On telling the truth (5:33–37: 33, 34–36, 37)
5. Transforming initiatives of peacemaking (5:38–42: 38, 39a, 39b–42)
6. Love your enemy (5:43–48: 43, 44–45, 46–47, 48 [summary])
[Introduction to next section: 6:1]
7. Almsgiving (6:2–4: 2a, 2b, 3–4)
8. Prayer (6:5–6: 5a, 5b, 6)
9. Prayer (6:7–15: 7a, 7b–8, 9–15)
10. Fasting (6:16–18: 16a, 16b, 17–18)
11. Storing treasures (6:19–23: 19a, 19b, 20–23)
12. Serve first God's reign and justice (6:24–34: 24ab, 24c–25, 26–34)
13. Judge not, but take the log out of your own eye (7:1–5: 1, 2–4, 5)
14. Place your trust not in gentile dogs, but in our Father God (7:6–12: 6a, 6b, 7–12)

I do not intend to consider in detail the many intriguing though highly contentious exegetical claims Stassen bases on this triadic approach to the composition of the body of the SM, but will confine myself to a critique of some of the general features of his approach.

One of my first concerns is Stassen's use of the term *triad* itself. Its normal, unmarked meaning is simply "a group or set of three connected . . . things",⁶ and it is obvious that there are several prominent sets of three in the SM, such as the series about being angry,

⁶ *New Oxford Dictionary of English* s.v.

calling someone “*raka*”, and calling someone a fool in Matt 5:22; the three examples of piety in 6:2–4, 5–6 and 16–18; the three petitions in 6:9b–10; the command to ask, seek and knock in 7:7; and so on.⁷ These are not, however, the triads that Stassen has in mind. His use of the term has a suspiciously Hegelian ring to it: traditional teaching, vicious cycle and transforming initiative is nothing but a variant of Hegel’s triad of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. That the author of the SM would have used such a sophisticated logical-ethical schema consistently throughout the body of the SM is extremely dubious.

Furthermore, using his own analysis, most, if not all, of Stassen’s triads could perhaps be presented more successfully as two pairs of nestled dyads, that is, A+B, in which B is again resolved into C+D.⁸ In Stassen’s example of Matt 5:21–26,⁹ A would be the traditional teaching (5:21), while B would be Jesus’ response or interpretation (5:22–26), which in turn could be divided into a negative section C (5:22) and a positive section D (5:23–26). Similarly, 5:27–30, the teaching about adultery and lust, may be divided into A, the traditional teaching (5:27), followed by B, Jesus’ interpretation (5:28–30), which again consists of C, the negative section (5:28) and D, the positive command (5:29–30). Such an analysis into a dyadic instead of a triadic structure of course agrees with the conventional view that 5:21–48 consists of a series of “antitheses”. Stassen dismisses a dyadic structure precisely because in his view these teachings “are not antithetical to the Law”, but rather “fulfilments”.¹⁰ Such a view, however, ignores the discourse structure of at least 5:21–48, which on the first level of discourse makes a clear distinction between the tradition and Jesus’ interpretation of the tradition. The distinction is

⁷ The principle of three also appears to be at work in the introduction (5:3–10, 11–12, 13–16) and in the conclusion (7:13–14, 15–23, 24–27); see Luz (1989, 213). According to Allison, “[t]he most obvious fact of the Sermon on the Mount, is that it is built around triads”, but he uses the term triad in a more comprehensive sense than either Stassen or myself. Allison identifies, e.g., two triads in 5:21–48: the first spans 21–32 (On murder; On adultery; On divorce), the second 33–48 (Do not swear; Turn the other cheek; Love your enemy) (1987, 432–433, 438); cf. also Guelich (1982, 177). My understanding of triads does not of course exclude the possibility of larger triadic units.

⁸ For such a grouping, see also Lausberg (1998, 210, §443.2a).

⁹ Cf. Stassen (2003, 270–274).

¹⁰ Stassen (2003, 268, 270). Viewing these pericopes as antitheses does not imply, however, that they are antithetical to the Law; see n. 23 below.

strongly marked by the emphatic repetition of the metadiscursive formula ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις (“You have heard that it was said to those of old”) with its variants (5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43), on the one hand, and the formula ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν (“But I say to you”), on the other (5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). The discourse structure thus favours a first, dyadic division in 5:21–48. Stassen’s proposal of a triadic structure in these verses appears to be ideologically motivated, rather than linguistically based, as he contends.

Closely related to the previous point is the fact that Stassen’s analysis ignores the preponderance of parallelistic pairs encountered in the body of the SM: compare, for example, 5:29 and 30; 32a and b; 44b and c; 45b and c; 46 and 47; 6:14 and 15; 19 and 20; 22b–c and 23a–b; 24b and c; 26–27 and 28–30; 7:6a–b and c–d; 9 and 10; 13 and 14; 16b and c; 17a and b; and 18a and b. At the very least, such pairs indicate that other principles of composition may be as important or more than the triadic principle Stassen identifies. Furthermore, in addition to pairs (dyads) and triads, we also find tetrads, that is, sets of four; for example, the repetition of ἔνοχος ἔσται in 5:21–22; heaven, earth, Jerusalem and your head in 5:34–36; hitting on the cheek, taking to court, forcing one mile, and asking and wishing to loan in 5:39–42. These further relativise the significance of the proposed triadic structure.

One of the apparent strengths of Stassen’s analysis is that it purports to be based on identifiable textual and linguistic criteria. However, if we examine each of the proposed criteria against the evidence, this foundation turns out to be more shaky than Stassen suggests. (The following criteria are taken from Stassen’s summary of the characteristics of a triad quoted above.)

- (a) *The Traditional Righteousness is presented as coming from Jewish tradition; the Vicious Cycle and the Transforming Initiative are presented as Jesus’ teaching, with authority.* While this difference in presentation is clear in 5:21–48, and perhaps even in 6:1–15, there is no clear distinction between Jesus’ own teaching and the tradition in the rest of the SM, from 6:19 onwards. Stassen indeed has difficulties to fit 6:19–7:12 into his compositional schema.
- (b) *The Traditional Righteousness does not begin with a particle.* This criterion is not very helpful. To begin with, it is not clear what Stassen means by a particle, but in view of his description and identification of the *Vicious Cycle* it is to be assumed that he means any con-

nective word. If this is the case, the criterion itself can be falsified in six of the fourteen triads instances, namely, 5:31 (δέ), 33 (πάλιν); 6:2 (οὖν), 5 (καί), 7 (δέ), and 16 (δέ). Even if it were true of every triad, it would not be unusual not to find a connective particle in this position: since the so-called traditional teaching occurs at the beginning of each new and relatively independent section, it is the passage as a whole that is connected asyndetically with the preceding passage, not the traditional teaching as such. Furthermore, this criterion has no predictive value, since we cannot conversely assume that every sentence without a connective particle introduces a new triad.

- (c) *The main verb of the Traditional Righteousness is usually a future indicative or a subjunctive with an imperatival function.* The formulation of this criterion is imprecise: in several cases, the verb is in fact an imperative (δότη, 5:31; γίνεσθε, 6:16; θησαυρίζετε, 6:19; κρίνετε, 7:1), while in one instance (6:24) there is no imperatival form at all. On the basis of Stassen's own criteria, 6:24 cannot therefore be the beginning of a new triad.¹¹
- (d) *The Vicious Cycle's main verb is a participle, infinitive, subjunctive, or indicative, but not an imperative.* On the face of it, this is a very exact criterion—any mood but the imperative (Matthew does not use the optative). At closer inspection, however, we see that Stassen's interpretation of the “main verb” is very subjective and arbitrary: he takes the main verb in 5:22 to be ὀργιζόμενος (a participle), instead of the indicative ἔσται (if we ignore λέγω as part of the metadiscourse); in 5:28 he identifies the main verb as βλέπων (a participle), instead of ἐμοίχευσεν, and so on. Instead of morphologically and syntactically precise categories, he decides on the basis of his interpretation what the “main verb” of the *Vicious Cycle* is, thus rendering his linguistic criterion worthless. Again, in 5:34 and 36 we find an infinitive (ὁμόσαι) and a subjunctive (ὁμόσης) used with imperatival functions, even if they are not morphologically speaking imperatives, which again invalidates his criterion.¹²

¹¹ Stassen's attempt (2003, 286–288) to justify reading 6:24 with the following, rather than with the preceding verses, is not very convincing.

¹² Stassen himself recognises the imperatival functions of these verbs, but he

- (e) *The Vicious Cycle begins with “but”, “for”, “lest”, or “therefore”* (δέ, οὖν, διὰ τοῦτο, μήποτε), or a negative. As a formal criterion, this contains such a conglomerate of different linguistic elements that its heuristic value is severely reduced. As we have seen above, we find words like “but” and “therefore” in several of the *Traditional Teachings* as well, and the same is true of the introduction to *Transforming Initiatives* (cf. οὖν in 5:23; 6:9; δέ in 5:29, 37; 6:3, 6, 17, 20; ἀλλά in 5:39b); they are also found within (i.e., not at the beginning of) the various members of a triad (cf. δέ in 5:22 [2x with ὅς]; 6:15, 23, 27, 29, 30; οὖν in 5:48; 6:2, 8, 22, 23, 31, 34; 7:11, 12; ἀλλά in 6:13, 18). διὰ τοῦτο occurs only in 6:25, and it is seriously to be doubted that the passage of which this is purported to be a *Vicious Cycle* starts with 6:24. μήποτε is found twice in the SM: the first occurrence, in 5:25, indeed belongs to a section Stassen identifies as a *Transforming Initiative*.¹³ The second instance is in 7:6, a verse that Stassen interprets with some difficulty as the beginning of a new triad, with 6a as the *Traditional Teaching* and 6b as the *Vicious Cycle*.¹⁴ It is therefore only in this one dubious instance that μήποτε may be said to introduce the *Vicious Cycle*; its inclusion in the criterion is in fact intended to support the doubtful identification of 7:6b as a *Vicious Cycle*. The use of the negative particles οὐ and μή is so all-pervasive that they cannot be used to identify the beginning of the *Vicious Cycle*.
- (f) *The Vicious Cycle often includes λέγω ὑμῖν*. The value of λέγω ὑμῖν as a marker of the *Vicious Cycle* is seriously diminished by the fact that according to Stassen it forms part of the *Transforming Initiative* in 5:44.¹⁵
- (g) *The main verb of the Transforming Initiative is a positive imperative, not a negative prohibition*. There are two problems with this criterion: (i) Not all positive imperatives are part of a *Transforming Initiative* according to Stassen’s analysis; compare, for example, ἔσεσθε, 5:48;¹⁶ and προσέχετε, 6:1. (ii) A negative command can have a

dismisses them because they do not conform to the “strict” criterion of a morphological imperative (2003, 278).

¹³ Stassen (2003, 272).

¹⁴ Stassen (2003, 289–295).

¹⁵ Stassen (2003, 282).

¹⁶ Although this is a future indicative, it functions as a positive command, as

positive meaning, such as *μὴ γνώτω*, “do not let know” in 6:3, which Stassen indeed interprets as part of a *Transforming Initiative*.¹⁷ The same may apply to *μὴ ἀντιστῆναι τῷ πονηρῷ*, “do not resist evil” (or: “do not retaliate against an evil person”)¹⁸ in 5:39, which Stassen is forced to regard as part of a *Vicious Cycle*.

- (h) *The Transforming Initiative usually begins with δέ and ends with a supporting explanation.* As I have already noted, *δέ* may be found at the beginning of every member of the triad and it also occurs within these members, which renders the first part of this criterion worthless as an indicator of the beginning of the *Transforming Initiative*. Supporting explanations are likewise given not only at the end of *Transforming Initiatives*, but also within other members of the triad (cf. e.g. the use of *γάρ* in 5:46; 6:7, 8; 7:2).

This cursory evaluation of Stassen’s linguistic evidence shows that it has very little predictive value for the identification and demarcation of the different members of a triad. Despite his claim that this approach provides us with “fairly precise distinguishing characteristics”, “precise enough that we will surely know whether or not [a] pericope fits the criteria”,¹⁹ it is clear that in most cases Stassen first determined the triad and only then tried to find distinguishing characteristics. (Although this criticism by itself does not necessarily invalidate his general hypothesis about the role of triads in the SM, it does show that his claim of extensive linguistic support for the hypothesis is untenable.)

Although most of Stassen’s triads are based on the traditional demarcation of pericopes in the SM, his insistence that the whole body of the SM be divided into triads leads to two problems. The first entails the forced triadic structure he imposes on 6:19–23, 6:24–34, and 7:6–12. These passages do not exhibit an obvious tripartite structure and Stassen’s attempts to analyse them as such

also, e.g., *ἀποδώσεις*, 5:33; *ἀγαπήσεις*, *μισήσεις*, 5:43. Stassen (2003, 282) however interprets *ἔσεσθε τέλειοι* as a future statement, “You will be complete”, which does not make sense after the preceding rhetorical question. *ἔσεσθε* is also used to express a command in 6:5.

¹⁷ Stassen (2003, 284).

¹⁸ Cf. Betz (1995, 280–281).

¹⁹ Stassen (2003, 274).

are not persuasive.²⁰ The second, related difficulty is that his approach does not make provision for verses not forming part of a triad. Obvious examples of such verses are 5:48, 6:1 and 7:12, all of which appear to summarise the general principles of the preceding or subsequent sections, instead of belonging to a single pericope.²¹

To summarise my critique of Stassen's proposal: although his interpretation is apparently based on linguistic and compositional features in the body of the SM, he in fact forces the SM into a straitjacket formed by an ethical schema. The compositional features of the SM are, however, too varied and subtle to be captured by such an approach. We may further conclude from this example that we should not expect to find one single compositional strategy at work in every part of the SM.

In the second part of my essay, I want to propose an alternative interpretation of the compositional features in Stassen's model pericope, Matt 5:21–26.

3. *Analysis of the Composition of Matt 5:21–26*

Stassen, as we have seen, treats 5:21–26 as a triad consisting of the *traditional teaching* on murder in 5:21, Jesus' teaching on the *vicious cycles* that lead to murder and judgement in 5:22, and the *transforming initiatives* that deliver from the vicious cycles in 5:23–26. According to him, Jesus does not make the impossible demand that people should not get angry, but that they should "take initiatives that transform the relationship from anger to reconciliation".²² Stassen rejects the conventional practice of analysing the pericope as an antithesis, because this pericope and the others following in Matthew 5 "are not antithetical to the Law".²³

²⁰ See his summary in Table 4 (2003, 299).

²¹ Cf. Betz (1995, 320, 349, 518): Matt 5:48 "presents a final maxim summing up the doctrine underlying not only the sixth antithesis but the entire set of antitheses (5:21–48)"; 6:1 "begins with a general exhortation and serves as an introductory principle, setting up, as it were, the basic patterns and concepts [of 6:1–18]"; and 7:12 "serves to summarize the ethical discussion of 5:17–7:11".

²² Stassen (2003, 272).

²³ Stassen (2003, 270). He clearly misunderstands the function of the rhetorical figure of an antithesis: this figure makes use of a contrasting pair to illuminate a

There is, however, strong support for reading 5:21–26 and the following passages as antitheses with a dyadic structure. In the first place, in the preceding verses, which are programmatic statements about the whole of the SM, Jesus himself lays the groundwork for a dyadic reading: he acknowledges that his interpretation of the Law and Prophets may be seen as opposed to the traditional view (5:17), and he indicates that the righteousness of the Kingdom contrasts with that of the religious leadership (5:20). Secondly, the discourse structure of these passages points to a dyadic composition: the use of the metadiscursive formulae “You have heard that it was said” and “But I say to you” clearly divides these pericopes into two main parts, a traditional teaching and Jesus’ own teaching.

Matthew 5:21–26 therefore have an overall dyadic structure formed by 5:21 and 22–26. As far as the latter is concerned, 5:22 is usually viewed in recent scholarship as the antithesis to the traditional or inadequate teaching on murder in 5:21, while 5:23–26 are considered to contain two illustrations or applications of the principle involved.²⁴ There are however several problems with this analysis. As Stassen rightly points out, the pericope as a whole is not really about murder,²⁵ nor are 5:23–24 and 25–26 illustrations of the preceding verses.²⁶ I hope to demonstrate that attention to the composition of 5:21–26 will help us understand both the overall topic of this pericope, and the connection between the various subsections.

The first division, as I have said, is between 5:21 and 22–26. In 5:22 Jesus gives a rhetorical elaboration of the formulation in 5:21 in which he accomplishes two things: (a) he demonstrates the absurdity of a casuistic interpretation of the Law that tries to couple transgressions with punishments and (b) he gives by implication the

point, but without necessarily implying the rejection of one of the members. See the definition by Rowe (1997, 142): “Antithesis consists of the juxtaposition of opposite meanings.” Cf. also Lausberg (1998, 209–210, §443); Aune (2003, 36), s.v. “Antithesis”.

²⁴ Cf. e.g. Guelich (1982, 189); Strecker (1984, 70–71); Kodjak (1986, 92); Davies and Allison (1988, 520); Hagner (1993, 115–116); and Betz (1995, 51, 215) (although Betz structures v. 22 somewhat differently). Luz treats 5:21–22, 23–24 and 25–26 as three independent literary units (1989, 280–281).

²⁵ *Pace*, e.g. Betz, Davies and Allison, and Hagner who use the heading “On Murder” for this pericope; or Luz, who gives the heading “On Killing”. Stassen complains that “[t]hus the traditional teaching, not Jesus’ teaching, provides the heading” (2003, 271).

²⁶ Stassen (2003, 271).

Table 1

	<i>Transgression</i>		<i>Court of reference</i>	
↑	²¹ ὃς δ' ἂν φονεύσῃ ("murder")	:	ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει ("judgement")	↓
↑	²² πᾶς ὁ ὀργιζόμενος ("anger")	:	ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει ("judgement/court")	↓
↑	ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ . . . ῥακά ("raka")	:	ἔνοχος ἔσται τῷ συνεδρίῳ ("Jewish Council")	↓
↑	ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ μωρέ ("fool")	:	ἔνοχος ἔσται εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός ("hell")	↓

underlying principle of the tradition. The composition of 5:21–22 may be schematised as in Table 1.

The formulation of the tradition in 5:21 consists of two elements, an identification of the transgression, namely murder, and a court of reference in which the transgression will be judged. In the elaboration in 5:22, Jesus uses a series of three, that is, a triad, of transgressions, each coupled with a court of reference.²⁷ The series of courts of reference represents a clear pattern of intensification.²⁸ The first element in the series, κρίσις, is taken over from the traditional formulation and refers to judgement in general or to a local court,²⁹ the second refers to the highest Jewish court,³⁰ and the third to the place of eternal judgement.³¹

The direction of the series of transgressions is somewhat problematic. Some scholars indeed warn against trying to distinguish

²⁷ For a similar triadic analysis see Davies and Allison (1988, 509–510).

²⁸ Cf. Jeremias (1968, 975), even though he does not think the three phrases refer to different courts; Guelich (1982, 187–188); Luz (1989, 280–281); Hagner (1993, 116).

²⁹ See Guelich (1973, 44–47; 1982, 183–184); L&N §56.1 n. 3; BDAG s.v., 2; cf. Davies and Allison (1988, 509, 511); Luz (1989, 282); and Betz (1995, 218).

³⁰ See BDAG s.v. συνέδριον 1c; Luz (1989, 282).

³¹ See BDAG s.v. γέεννα; L&N §1.21; Luz (1989, 282). The increasing series obeys the so-called rhetorical "law of augmenting parts"; see Lausberg (1998, 213–214, §451).

between the degrees of seriousness of the transgressions.³² From a compositional perspective, however, it would be strange if the left-hand elements of the series do not exhibit any patterning, while the right-hand elements do (see Table 1). It also appears unlikely that experiencing anger, and calling somebody “*raka*” or “fool” are all to be considered synonymous expressions. We therefore expect some form of directionality in the series. I would argue that using terms of abuse as an expression of anger is subordinate to anger as general category (which could also be expressed in other ways, including physical aggression and murder). There is thus a movement from the more inclusive to the more specific, that is, a decrease. It is more problematic to distinguish between ῥακά and μωπέ: the main difficulty lies in determining the relative emotive values of the two words, since there does not appear to be a significant semantic difference between them.³³ Neither was necessarily considered a serious term of abuse,³⁴ which strengthens the impression that there is a decrease in severity of transgression from the first term, namely anger, to the latter two. I would suggest that ῥακά as foreign loanword perhaps had a stronger emotive value than the common Greek word μωπέ. If this is the case, we have a diminishing series as regards transgressions,³⁵ coupled with an increasing series as regards courts of reference and potential punishment. Such a paradoxical state of affairs fits in well with the intention of 5:22: by *increasing* the potential punishment while *decreasing* the transgression, Jesus emphasises in hyperbolic fashion that any form of violence or aggression against another

³² Cf. Bertram (1967, 841–842) and Fiedler (1991, 450). These scholars fail to recognise the rhetorical function of the series.

³³ Cf. Mussies (1984, 424): “In all probability this word [sc. ῥακά] escaped translation because its emotional value could not be rendered exactly.” See also Luz (1989, 282): “There is no significant difference in meaning, let alone an intensification between the two”; Wilcox (1992, 605); Hagner (1993, 116–117). Contra Str-B 1:279, who see an intensification in meaning from ῥακά to μωπέ. Lambrecht (1983, 113) also views μωπέ as a more serious insult than ῥακά. Cf. also Betz (1995, 222): μωρός is “either the Greek equivalent of the loanword ῥακά or something even more insulting”.

³⁴ Cf. BDAG s.vv. μωρός c; ῥακά. The article on the latter has references to Chrysostom and Basilius, both of whom indicate that it had no strong abusive value; see also MM s.v. μωρός; Jeremias (1968, 974); Betz (1995, 221). The examples given by Rüger (1978, 608) seem to indicate that ῥακά was a stronger invective, however.

³⁵ Luz points out that patristic exegesis (he cites Augustine and Thomas) attempted to find an *increasing* list of offences (1989, 283). Among modern scholars, Lambrecht also maintains this view (1983, 113).

person, no matter how insignificant, is as good as murder.³⁶ This conclusion is underlined by the tetrad formed by the juxtaposition of the traditional formulation on murder in 5:21 and the triad in 5:22: the series of four created by the repetition of ἐνοχος ἔσται suggests an inexorable logic that implicitly postulates an identity between murder and insult.

The connecting particle οὖν at the beginning of 5:23 is often understood to have an inferential function, such as “therefore” or “consequently”,³⁷ which fits the interpretation of 5:23–26 as illustrative examples.³⁸ The particle is here, however, rather a marker of continuation meaning “so”, “now” or “then”;³⁹ it simply indicates the next section of the pericope. Contrary to the commonly-held view that 5:23–24 contains an illustrative example of how one should deal with anger, the situation outlined is not very realistic and can therefore not have been meant as a “real-life” example⁴⁰ to be followed literally. How likely is it that someone who probably had to travel several days to get to the Temple in Jerusalem, and bought a sacrificial animal there, would be able to leave the sacrifice in the Temple with an official and travel back home to be reconciled with his brother before returning once again to offer the sacrifice? The simple logistics involved makes this scenario an impossibility. Jesus therefore once again uses hyperbolic language to stress that reconciliation with one’s brother, that is, the removal of conflict between human beings, enjoys priority above even the most important cultic act.⁴¹

The situation depicted in the third part of Jesus’ teaching, in 5:25–26, again has an unreal, hyperbolic quality. Too little information is given for the audience to determine who is the guilty party⁴² or what is the cause of the dispute—it is almost as if Jesus

³⁶ See also Guelich (1973, 39–52, esp. 51).

³⁷ Thus, e.g. Betz (1995, 222). Such a view of the particle also agrees with Stassen’s interpretation of 5:23–26 as the final and most important member of the triad (2003, 273).

³⁸ See n. 24 above.

³⁹ See BDAG s.v., 2d.

⁴⁰ Cf. Betz (1995, 222).

⁴¹ Luz (1989, 289) likewise underlines the unrealistic and hyperbolic nature of these verses; cf. also Davies and Allison (1988, 518): “[O]ne cannot really imagine someone doing it.”

⁴² Thus also Kodjak (1986, 93).

is saying, “No matter what the cause, or whether you are guilty or not, you will end up in prison!” This impression of the inevitable outcome is strengthened by the rhetorically effective tetradic sequence in 5:25 of opponent, judge, guard, and prison, as well as the emphatic and hyperbolic denial in 5:26. Matthew 5:25–26 thus contains the warning: be well-disposed to your opponent while you have the opportunity, or you could suffer grave consequences, whatever the strength of your legal case may be.⁴³

To summarise my analysis of the composition of 5:21–26 (see Table 2): taking as his point of departure a traditional teaching on murder and its legal consequence (5:21), Jesus offers his own triadic teaching (5:22–26). In the first part (5:22) he suggests that even the most diluted form of anger at someone else is in principle as good as murder. In the second part (5:23–24) he implies that someone else’s sense of being wronged by you is enough to disrupt your relationship with God. Finally, in the third part (5:25–26) he stresses that any conflict between you and someone else may have dire consequences.

Table 2: Dyads, triads and tetrads in Matt 5:21–26

Dyad:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Traditional teaching on murder and the legal consequence (v. 21) | ┐ |
| 2. Jesus’ own interpretation (vv. 22–26) | └ |

Triad 1:

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| (a) When you are angry with someone (v. 22) | <i>Tetrad 1</i> |
| <i>Triad 2:</i> | (ἔνοχος ἔσται) |
| i) Being angry | |
| ii) Calling someone “ <i>Raka</i> ” | └ |
| iii) Calling someone “Fool” | ┐ |

- (b) When someone has something against you (vv. 23–24)

- (c) When there is a legal conflict between you and someone else (vv. 25–26)

Tetrad 2:

- i) Opponent
 ii) Judge
 iii) Guard
 iv) Jail
-

⁴³ For possible eschatological implications, see Luz (1989, 290) and Betz (1995, 229).

Contrary to Stassen's contention, there is not really a contrast between the section on anger in 5:22 and the rest of Jesus' teaching: all three subsections are characterised by hyperbole and a sense of unreality. While it is true that the first subsection lacks the explicit imperatives we find in the latter two, all three subsections clearly carry the implication that conflict is destructive and that it has to be resolved.

There are also other noteworthy motifs binding the three subsections together. Both the first and the last subsection refer to a court and to potentially severe punishment, in both cases for apparently trivial transgressions. In all three subsections, in fact, the transgression or cause of conflict is depicted as something absurdly minor: in the first, it amounts to calling someone names (5:22); in the second, it is a brother having "something" (τι) against you (5:23); while in the third, it may be as little as owing a small coin (κοδράντην, 5:26).

We find an interesting variation as regards the person causing the tension. In the first subsection, the other person is perceived to have done something, to which you react with anger. He is therefore the cause of the conflict. In the second, the other person considers you to have disturbed the relationship and to be the cause of the conflict. In the third subsection, it is not clear who the guilty person is; the situation is merely described as a legal wrangle. Either party could therefore have caused the conflict. Three different scenarios on the possible relationships between the parties to a conflict are therefore depicted in the three parts of the triad.

Finally, it is remarkable in a sermon in which righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) plays a central role (cf. 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33), and in a passage which takes as point of departure the rightful punishment of murder, that the question of justice or fairness is suspended in all three subsections of Jesus' teaching. It does not seem to matter whether you have just cause to be angry with your brother, whether your brother has reason to have something against you, or who the guilty party in the legal conflict is. The exaggerations in these sections contribute to an overturn of traditional principles of fairness. This may in fact be the clue to the meaning of this passage. The righteousness of the Kingdom of heaven that has to exceed that of the legal and religious experts (5:20) is not based on a conventional sense of fairness, on a just and equitable relation between transgression and punishment, or cause and consequence. In the sphere of human relationships, any conflict is a rejection of the other—is therefore, in its essence, murder, and anyone who is a party to such

a conflict is a murderer. The righteous disciple has the task to eliminate and resolve conflict, to be a peacemaker; to treat enemies as friends, and outsiders as insiders, whether they deserve it or not (cf. 5:9, 44–48). “On conflict” may therefore be a more suitable heading for 5:21–26 than “On murder”.

The use of compositional structures such as dyads, triads and tetrads in this passage thus creates a rhetorical logic that binds the different parts together and which implies a message not overtly formulated, namely, that the logic of the righteousness of the Kingdom of heaven overturns the logic of human justice.

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DER GEGENWÄRTIGE STAND DER FORSCHUNG ZUM MARKUS-EVANGELIUM UND DIE FRAGE NACH DER HISTORISCHEN UND GEGENWÄRTIGEN KONTEXT-PLAUSIBILITÄT

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ABSTRACT

In the 1990s the history of interpretation of Mark's Gospel shows three main approaches: New Redactional Criticism, Narrative Criticism, Historical Genre Criticism. The synchronic method won the priority over the diachronic method. The coherence of the Markan text-signals can be created by the criterion of historical and present context-plausibility. The Markan narrative framework continuously produces the paradox portrait of Jesus Christ as the powerful and the same time suffering ruler. The historical context-plausibility amplifies this view for every reader of the Greco-Roman world. Mark's Gospel narrates a public singular life with the coming and open future of God. With a permanent dialogue and struggle of methods and approaches this Gospel opens the way to its new reality.

1. *Einleitung*

Im September 2004 konnte ich den „Erträge der Forschung“ Band *Das Markus-Evangelium* für die Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft Darmstadt abschließen (Dormeyer 2005). 1989 hatte ich den Band 263 derselben Reihe *Evangelium als literarische und theologische Gattung* herausgegeben. Das letzte Kapitel (7), „Gegenwärtige Fragestellungen“, hatte ich in zwei Unterpunkte aufgeteilt: „7.1 Textlinguistik und Textpragmatik“ und „7.2 Historische Gattungsanalyse“. Diese Aufteilung hat sich bewährt. Ich konnte große Teile dieses Kapitels in den neuen Band *Das Markus-Evangelium* übernehmen. Allerdings erhielt das Kapitel (6) einen neuen Namen: „Methodologische Fragestellungen zum Markusevangelium von 1960–1990“.

Der Unterpunkt 6.1 lautet jetzt: Erzähltextanalyse und Texttheorie. Denn zum alten Untertitel „Textlinguistik und Textpragmatik“ war

die Erzähltextanalyse mit dem „Narrative Criticism“ hinzugefügt worden, weil sie sich ab 1960 langsam und tastend entwickelt hatte.

Im neuen Abschlusskapitel, „Das Markusevangelium in der gegenwärtigen Diskussion“, konnte ich dann drei Hauptströmungen ausmachen: Neue Redaktionsgeschichte, Erzähltextanalyse und Historische Gattungskritik. Letztere geht also ungebrochen weiter, die Redaktionsgeschichte aber wird zur Neuen Redaktionsgeschichte, die Textlinguistik und Textpragmatik werden zur Erzähltextanalyse. Wie verhalten sich diese drei Richtungen zueinander? Wie ist eine Rückfrage vom Markusevangelium zum vorösterlichen Jesus möglich? Diesen Fragen möchte ich mit einigen Schlaglichtern nachgehen.

2. Neue Redaktionsgeschichte, Erzähltextanalyse und Historische Gattungskritik

Lindemann setzt seinen Literaturbericht zu den Synoptischen Evangelien mit der Beschränkung auf „1992–2000“ fort (2004). Diese Eingrenzung ist kein reiner Zufall, trotz der Abwiegung von Lindemann. Denn in den 90er Jahren hat sich in der Redaktionsgeschichte der Vorrang der Synchronie vor der Diachronie weitgehend durchgesetzt (vgl. den einschlägigen Titel von Theobald 1978). Es lässt sich von einer neuen Redaktionsgeschichte sprechen.

Die neue Redaktionsgeschichte nimmt umfassend die Erzähltextanalyse und die historische Gattungskritik auf, die Synchronie erhält einen Vorrang vor der Diachronie. Allerdings bleibt die Reserve gegenüber der Rezeptionstheorie weiterhin bestehen. Denn nach wie vor wollen die Redaktionsgeschichtler einen historischen Autor und eine historische Gemeinde identifizieren (Söding 1995). Die offene Frage ist, ob an diese unsicher bleibenden Hypothesen die Rückfrage zum vorösterlichen Jesus notwendig gebunden bleibt, oder ob der Längsschnittbeweis zum vorösterlichen Jesus über die historischen Gattungen mit ihren kommunikativen Funktionen überprüfbarer verläuft.

Gerade hinsichtlich der Kleingattungen zeichnet sich ein neuer Konsens ab, ihnen eine anhaltende Stabilität bis in die vorösterliche Zeit zuzugestehen, z.B. den Chrien, zu denen die Gethsemani-Szene Mk 14:32–42 gehört (Feldmeier 1987; Theißen/Merz 1996).

Die Diskussion konzentriert sich daher zum einen auf die Identität des so erschlossenen vorösterlichen Jesus und zum anderen auf das Gesamtbild des verschrifteten Mk-Ev am Ende des Traditionsprozesses. Wie lässt sich aus den vorösterlichen Haftpunkten eine Kohärenz

bilden (Schröter 1997)? Zu ergänzen ist: Wie lässt sich aus der nachösterlichen Textur des Mk-Ev eine Kohärenz bilden?

3. *Das Differenzkriterium und die Beschreibungsmodelle von Redaktionsarbeit*

Theißen und Winter stellen ausführlich die Forschungsgeschichte zum „Differenzkriterium“ und seiner Kritik vor (1997, 28–175). Anschließend entwickeln sie das „historische Plausibilitätskriterium als Korrektur des Differenzkriteriums“ (1997, 175–233).

Eine parallele Entwicklung ist für die Forschungsarbeit am Mk-Ev zu beobachten. Bis zur Traditionshypothese von Herder und der „Zwei-Quellen-Theorie“ des 19. Jh. galt das Mk-Ev als das schwächste Evangelium. Es stand im Schatten des 1. Evangeliums, des Mt-Ev, und des Lk Doppelwerks. Erst Herder gab positiv dem Mk-Ev eine Priorität, weil es am nahesten am mündlichen Evangelium steht und weil es dieses am unverfälschtesten wiedergibt (Dormeyer 1989, 31–33). Das mündliche Evangelium wiederum zeichnet sich durch seine Unberührtheit von der Umwelt aus, d.h. durch seine vollkommene Differenz zur Umwelt. Die Anhänger der Zwei-Quellen-Theorie entwickelten dann im 19. Jh. für die Differenz des ersten Evangeliums gegenüber den anderen antiken Büchern drei Beschreibungsmodelle zur Redaktion mündlicher und schriftlicher Traditionen: „Sammlung“ nach der Diegesenhypothese nach Schleiermacher; „Interpretation“ nach Herder und „Schöpfung“ nach Bauer (Hilgenfeld 1861; Dormeyer 1989, 42). Im literaturgeschichtlichen Vergleich um 1900 dominierte die „Interpretation“. „Schöpfung“ schied aufgrund des Interesses an Literar- und Traditionskritik aus, war aber im Ansatz bei Wrede zu finden. „Sammlung“ erschien zu wenig autorbezogen, klang aber bereits bei der These vom „nichtliterarischen Volksbuch“ an (Dormeyer 1989, 48–76). In der Formgeschichte und frühen Redaktionsgeschichte stieg dann die „Sammlung“ zum vorherrschenden Paradigma auf (Dormeyer 1989, 76–131).

In der „Sammlung“ erzeugen die Kleingattungen und die wenigen Bemerkungen des Redaktors die Differenz zur Literatur der Umwelt. Bei der „Interpretation“ dagegen steht das Gesamtwerk auf dem Prüfstand des Differenzkriteriums. Entsprechend grundlegend diskutierte der literaturgeschichtliche Vergleich die Gemeinsamkeiten und Differenzen des Mk-Ev zur damaligen Literatur. Dem Mk-Ev wurde plausibel eine neue Gattung zugeordnet, die zugleich mit der

ost- und westantiken Literatur vergleichbar blieb: „Urliteratur, atl. Geschichtsschreibung, Verkündigungsliteratur, dogmatische Geschichtsschreibung, biographische Sondergattung, nichtliterarisches Volksbuch, volkstümliche Biographie“ (Dormeyer 1989, 48–76).

Die Redaktionsgeschichte knüpfte mit „theologischer Geschichtsschreibung“ wieder vorsichtig an den literaturgeschichtlichen Vergleich an. Die Differenz der Eschatologie des Mk-Ev zum profanen und frühjüdischen Geschichtsverständnis wurde stark herausgearbeitet, während aber die Gemeinsamkeiten blass blieben. Für die Plausibilität hatte die hypothetische Gemeindesituation einzustehen (Dormeyer 1989, 123–131).

Ende der 60er Jahre wurden dann neue Fragen gestellt. Das poetische Paradigma „Schöpfung“ des 19. Jh. brach sich erneut Bahn. Die strukturelle Erzähltextanalyse und die Tiefenpsychologie erkundeten die Texttiefenstruktur, die Erzähltextanalyse/Narrative Criticism und die Leser-Lektüren erkundeten die Textoberflächenstruktur (Dormeyer 1989, 131–143).

Die Differenz des Mk-Ev zu anderen Werken lag dann in der auswählenden Aktualisierung der Texttiefenstruktur und in der schöpferischen Anordnung von erzähltheoretischen und poetischen Regeln auf der Textoberfläche. Die Plausibilität erzeugt der gegenwärtige Rezipient beim Akt des Lesens. Daher kann der Leser das Mk-Ev mit allen literarischen Produkten der Welt-Kommunikation vergleichen und seine Plausibilität an ihnen erproben. Die Wirkungsplausibilität des Mk-Ev lässt sich mit den neuen texttheoretischen Methoden in ihrer vollen Breite erkunden.

Die meisten Arbeiten zur Erzählstruktur des Mk-Ev ab 1990 erschienen zum Narrative Criticism, Reader-Response Criticism und zu den Poststructuralist Perspectives. Einige führen auch noch in strenger Methodik die textlinguistischen Ansätze der 70–80er Jahre weiter (Davidsen u.a. 1993). Diese Monographien arbeiteten die Neuansätze der 70–80er Jahre kreativ aus.

- Fowler liefert 1991 die Ausarbeitung der Leser-Aktivität (Reader) zu seiner Monographie von 1981 nach.
- Camery-Hoggatt stellt 1992 die Ironie nach Fowler 1981 u.a. in den Mittelpunkt der Markus-Exegese.
- Anderson und Moore stellen 1992 einen Sammelband zu den neuen Zugängen zum Mk-Ev vor.
- Moore führt 1992 die Dekomposition nach Derrida mit unterschiedlichen Leseversuchen des Mk-Ev fort.

- Moloney liefert 1992 eine ausführliche narrative Analyse des Mk-Ev.
- Broadhead arbeitet 1992, 1994 und 1999 drei narrative Monographien zum Mk-Ev aus. 2001 folgt ein knapper, narrativer Kommentar. Die „narrative Grammatik“ ist elementarisiert und daher handlich zum Interpretieren. Die Wundergeschichten schaffen ein einheitliches, narratives Porträt von Jesus (1992, 213). Das Mk-Ev ist genetisch als einheitliche, sondersprachliche Erzählung aus dem *Kerygma* entstanden (1994, 284–286).
- Hamerton-Kelly interpretiert 1994 das Mk-Ev narrativ nach der Gewalttheorie von Girard.
- Telford stellt 1995 einen Führer zum Mk-Ev nach den drei Methoden zusammen: „Mark as History“ (Redaktionsgeschichte) (S. 37–86), „Literary Approaches to Mark“ (S. 86–94) und „The Genre of Mark“ (Historische Gattungsanalyse) (S. 94–101). Da er die Originalität der Gattung „Evangelium“ betont (S. 94–96) und die „Biographie“ ablehnt (S. 96–97), bestimmt er „Structure and Arrangement“ und „Mark as Story“ allein nach dem „Narrative Criticism“ und „Reader Response Criticism“ (S. 101–115). Es fragt sich, ob der Biographie-Vergleich so kurz nur vorgestellt und kritisiert werden kann.
- 1999 bringt Telford eine umfassende Ausarbeitung zur „Theology“ des Mk-Ev heraus. Er nennt den erzählerischen Aufbau ein „drama“, lässt aber weiterhin die historische Gattungsanalyse aus (1999, 116–137).
- Kinukawa fokussiert 1995 die narrative Analyse des Mk-Ev als „eine japanische Lektüre“.
- Liew interpretiert ebenfalls 1999 das Mk-Ev intertextuell.
- Palmer legt 1999 in seiner „literary-structural analysis“ Wert auf das „Tage“-Schema des Mk-Ev (1999, 37–46). Er konstruiert vier Serien von „7 Tagen“: Mk 1:21–5:43; 6:1–8:26; 8:27–10:52; 11:1–16:8. Die Zeit wurde bisher im Mk-Ev zu wenig beachtet (Dormeyer 2002, 163–170). Doch sie ist nicht der Haupt-Kode, der die Gliederung bestimmt. Nur die letzte Serie von 7 Tagen trifft zu. Die erste Serie hätte mit der Jüngerberufung Mk 1:16–20, die Palmer noch zum Prolog rechnet, einsetzen und mit Mk 1:39 abschließen müssen. Für Mk 6:1–8:26 ist außerdem ein Wochenschema nicht erkennbar. Auch die Woche, die die Verklärung am 6. Tag umfasst (Mk 9:2), hätte mit Mk 9:50 enden müssen.

Insgesamt zeigt sich ein großer Reichtum an narrativer Analytik und an Konstruktion bzw. Dekonstruktion heutiger, möglicher Leseprozesse. Da diese Richtungen nicht an der Historie interessiert sind, können sie hier nicht breiter ausgeführt werden.

4. *Die historische Kontextplausibilität und die historische Gesamtplausibilität*

Nun fordern Theißen und Winter zusätzlich zur „Wirkungsplausibilität“ die „historische Kontextplausibilität“ (1997, 175–188). Der poetische Zugriff der Wirkungsplausibilität bleibt einseitig, wenn er die Rückfrage zur historischen Kontextplausibilität unterlässt.

Um diese, die historische Kontextplausibilität, zu erreichen, genügt nicht mehr die Engführung der Form- und Redaktionsgeschichte auf das Differenzkriterium. Es müssen wieder wie im literaturgeschichtlichen Vergleich alle verfügbaren zeitgeschichtlichen Texte herangezogen werden. Es geht wieder um einen intertextuellen Vergleich. Dieser beschränkt sich nicht nur auf die nachweisbar verarbeiteten Quellen, z.B. auf die Septuaginta, sondern bezieht alle damals herrschenden, lebenden Erzählgattungen ein, auch wenn deren Benutzung anhand von edierten Quellentexten nicht mehr nachgewiesen werden kann. Denn von der antiken Literatur ist nur ein Bruchteil überliefert worden. Die heute edierten, vollständigen Biographien setzen z.B. erst mit Plutarch ein. Dennoch gab es vor ihm eine Fülle griechischer Bioi (Berger 1984, 1231–1245; Sonnabend 2003).

Talbert wagte 1977/1978 als erster den Versuch, mit dem Biographievergleich eine historische Kontextplausibilität für das Mk-Ev aufzubauen. Eine Fülle weiterer Versuche und anderer Vergleiche folgte. Doch wurden diese neuen Ergebnisse von der Redaktionsgeschichte weitgehend ignoriert.

In den 90er Jahren führten aber die neuen Fragestellungen die Redaktionsgeschichte tatsächlich zu einer neuen Beobachtung der Wirkungsplausibilität. Es wird die Erzählgestalt des Mk-Ev als eine sinnvolle Einheit gesehen, und der Evangelist wird als ein autonomer Gestalter anerkannt. Die Erschließung von Traditionen beruht nicht mehr auf den angeblichen Brüchen und dem fragwürdigen Subtraktionsverfahren von Einzelsätzen und -satzteilen, sondern geht von der beabsichtigten Übereinstimmung des Evangeliums mit überlieferten Gattungen und Inhalten aus. Die Kontextplausibilität blieb jedoch für das Mk-Ev auf das AT und die frühjüdischen Texte eingegrenzt.

Gleichzeitig vermehrten sich die poetischen, ahistorischen Entwürfe der Texttheorie zu einer unüberschaubaren Fülle an Veröffentlichungen.

Bei der historischen Gattungskritik wiederum zeichnete sich eine Bevorzugung der Biographie-Gattung ab. Die historische Kontextplausibilität erwies sich für diese Gattung am stärksten.

Allerdings blieb die Forschung nicht bei einer vollen Einbettung des Mk-Ev in die hellenistische Bios-Gattung stehen (so BurrIDGE 1992; Frickenschmidt 1997), sondern baute den atl.-frühjüdischen Einfluss aus und stärkte die Differenz der Sondergattung Evangelium gegenüber dem Bios, der apokalyptischen Geschichtsschreibung und den anderen nahen Gattungsparallelen (Dormeyer 2005, 166–185).

Gegenüber der neuen Redaktionsgeschichte wurde herausgearbeitet, dass das Mk-Ev den idealen Leser aller damals möglichen Gemeinden zu einer Identifikation mit allen Rollen einlädt und nach wiederholtem, verstehendem Lesen die Übernahme der Autor-Perspektive einfordert. Von der Redaktionsgeschichte wird daher der Verzicht auf die Bestimmung einer historischen Einzelgemeinde und eines historischen Autors verlangt. Die Multiperspektivität des Evangelien-Textes gibt diese Definitionen nicht her, sondern erlaubt nur die Produktion einer Vielfalt plausibler Einzelhypothesen. Selbstverständlich konnte das Mk-Ev in einer fiktiven Einzelgemeinde unter einem historischen Gesichtspunkt gelesen werden. Doch diese Leseweise erschöpft weder die Syntax, Semantik und Pragmatik des Mk-Ev, noch lässt sich so dessen Entstehung erklären (Dormeyer 2002, 1–68). Wie bei der Rekonstruktion des vorösterlichen Jesus muss deutlich werden, dass die „historische Gesamtplausibilität“ sich erst aus der Verbindung von Wirkungs- und Kontextplausibilität ergibt und diese Verbindung erst die Besonderheit der historischen Gestalt des Mk-Ev freigibt (Theißen/Winter 1997, 191–194).

Diese Notwendigkeit des Zusammenkommens von Wirkungs- und historischer Kontextplausibilität gilt auch für die ahistorische Erzähltextanalyse und Lesetheorie.

Die narrativen Entwürfe und Leseweisen erhalten erst mit einer Verbindung zu einer historischen Welt die Möglichkeit ihrer Überprüfbarkeit und Differenzierung von anderen Zugriffen auf Welt. Zur Wirkungsplausibilität muss die Rückfrage zur historischen Kontextplausibilität hinzutreten.

Redaktionsgeschichte, Erzähltextanalyse und historische Gattungskritik grenzen sich daher ab den 90er Jahren nicht mehr gegenseitig aus, sondern erproben zunehmend die vielfältigen Möglichkeiten der gegenseitigen Interpretation (Dormeyer 2005, 153–185).

So entsteht für das Mk-Ev eine historische Gesamtplausibilität als Verbindung von Wirkungs- und Kontextplausibilität und als Herausarbeitung seiner Besonderheit als Anti-Herrscherbiographie (Wördemann 2002). Die „Theologischen Fragen“ werden in Interdependenz zur literarischen und theologischen Gestalt des Mk-Ev bearbeitet.

5. *Theologische Fragen und Erzählrollen*

Bei den „Theologischen Fragen“ zeigt sich durchgehend ab dem 19. Jh. eine Konzentration auf den „Sohn-Gottes-Hoheitstitel“, sowohl textkritisch, als auch interpretatorisch.

Bultmann hat vordergründig recht: „Der Tatsache, dass Mk – soweit wir sehen – als erster den Versuch unternommen hat, ein euangélion zu verfassen, das zugleich eine Darstellung des Lebens Jesu ist, entspricht es, dass bei ihm das mythische Element stärker hervortritt als bei Mt und Lk . . . Das einzige wesentliche Moment des Christusmythos, das Mk noch nicht aufgenommen hat, ist die Präexistenz Jesu“ (1957, 373ff.).

Die Präexistenz ist nicht explizit ausgedrückt. Aber sie bleibt eine mögliche Leseweise, angefangen mit der umstrittenen Zugehörigkeit des Sohn-Gottes-Hoheitstitels zur Überschrift Mk 1:1.

Die Tatsache, dass der Evangelist ein Leben Jesu mit mythischen Elementen verbindet, weist zutreffend der Anlage des Gesamtwerks das mögliche Herauslesen eines Einzelements zu, z.B. der Präexistenz. Nun gilt neuerdings wiederum für die Gesamtanlage: Ob die impliziten Autoren der synoptischen Evangelien die Präexistenz kennen oder nicht, ist für die Handlungsbögen des öffentlichen Auftretens Jesu völlig irrelevant. Jesus handelt als autonomer Mensch mit den damals gegebenen Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten innerhalb des anthropologischen und theologischen Horizonts der Antike oder des zeitübergreifenden Kunstwerkes. Die Biographie- und Geschichtsforschung weist nun eindrucksvoll nach, dass göttliche Vollmacht, prophetische Voraussagen und göttliche Visionen nicht die frühjüdische und hellenistisch-römische Anthropologie sprengen (Frickenschmidt 1997; Burridge 1992). Selbst die Präexistenz hebt diese nicht auf. Denn in welcher Weise soll der Sohn Gottes präexistent gewesen sein und wie äußert sich diese Präexistenz in seinem öffentlichen, menschlichen Wirken?

Man muss wie Wrede, Schulz und Schreiber gnostische Systeme des späten 2. Jh. anachronistisch in das Mk-Ev eintragen, um eine abweichende Anthropologie aufgrund der Präexistenz in das Mk-Ev einzutragen (Wrede 1901; Schreiber 1967, 222–229; Schulz 1967, 46–64).

Doch der antike Bios und die pathetische Geschichtsschreibung können solche Fehlinterpretationen korrigieren und eine zeitgeschichtlich angemessenere Kontextplausibilität herstellen.

Auch der Streit um den Grad der Anwesenheit der Königsherrschaft Gottes und der Vollmacht Jesu Christi, des Gottessohnes, Menschensohnes, Davidssohnes und Herrn lässt sich von der Vergleichsliteratur her schlichten. Der Held des Bios und der prophetischen Geschichtsschreibung vermag göttliche Kräfte schon in der Gegenwart sichtbar zu machen, einmal stärker, einmal schwächer. So lässt sich sowohl die Niedrigkeit Jesu (Schweizer 1998; Gundry 1993; Thompson 1989), als auch seine Hoheit betonen. Gegenwärtig überwiegt zu Recht die Betonung der Hoheit. Die Besonderheit des markinischen Jesus steht in enger Kontinuität zur Besonderheit des vorösterlichen Jesus. Darin hat Kähler (1969) recht. Nicht recht behalten hat er mit der Behauptung, die urchristlichen Traditionen seien „Trümmerfelder“. Bios, biographische Kleinliteratur und pathetische Geschichtsschreibung geben die Gattungen her, die diese Überlieferungen plausibel prägen und sichern. Der garstig breite Graben des Ostergeschehens (Lessing 1777, „Beweis“; 1967, 311) wird immer flacher, weil die nachösterlichen Besonderheiten Jesu Christi sich weitgehend auf die Besonderheiten des vorösterlichen Jesus von Nazaret innerhalb der antiken Geschichtsschreibung zurückführen lassen (Berger 2002, 37–87).

Die Tendenzwidrigkeit einzelner Erzählzüge des Mk-Ev, sowohl dem Urchristentum (Querschnittsbeweis) als auch dem Frühjudentum und dem Hellenismus (religionsgeschichtlicher Vergleich) gegenüber, wurde dann auch ohne Polemik von der neuen Redaktionsgeschichte und der historischen Erzähltext- und Gattungsanalyse herausgearbeitet. Diese Tendenzwidrigkeiten haben eine hohe Kontextplausibilität.

Es besteht Einigkeit darüber, dass die Erwartungen an die Hoheitstitel Christus und Sohn Gottes dem öffentlichen Auftreten Jesu widersprechen. Daher werden diese Hoheitstitel geheim gehalten, da sie erst in der vertrauensvollen Nachfolge bis zum Kreuzestod und bis zur Auferweckung richtig verstanden und bekennend ausgesprochen

werden können. Menschensohn, Davidssohn und Herr werden hingegen aufgrund ihrer akzeptierten Mehrdeutigkeit öffentlich ausgesprochen. Gott hat geheim Jesus von Nazaret mit dem Geist ausgestattet, zu seinem Sohn für Israel und die Völker eingesetzt und ihm die Herrschaft über die Welt mit späterer Gerichtsvollmacht übertragen. Jesus erweist sich zwar öffentlich nur als der Erfüller der weisheitlichen Hoffnungen auf die davidische Großfamilie. Als Mensch=Menschensohn erleidet er aber die Ablehnung seiner geheimen göttlichen Sendung, die zu Leiden, Kreuzigung, Auferweckung und Weltgericht führt. Das Mk-Ev ist eine Anti-Biographie der philosophischen Herrscherbiographien. Es fordert jeden Leser zur Identifikation mit dem neuen, eschatologischen Christusbild auf, das das herrschende Bild vom Philosophen-Kaiser und vom machpolitischen, eschatologischen Messias endgültig durchbricht.

Das neue paradoxe Christusbild des vollmächtigen und gleichzeitig leidenden Herrschers wird vom Erzählrahmen des Mk-Ev kontinuierlich aufgebaut; es wird nicht als bekannt und vorgegeben vorausgesetzt (Schnelle 2002, 227–234). Jesus Christus entfaltet als Lehrer und Prophet vollmächtig die Kompetenz zum Lehren, zur Wundertätigkeit, zu Symbolhandlungen. Woher er die Kompetenz zur Lehre, Prophetie und Wundertätigkeit hat, wird zwar von Anfang an gefragt (Mk 1:27; 4:41; 6:3, 14–16; 8:27–30), aber erst beim feierlichen Einzug in Jerusalem mit dem Lobpreis „der angekommenen Königsherrschaft unseres Vaters David“ (Mk 11:10) beantwortet. Gleichzeitig erfährt Jesus nach der Woche voll Heil in Kafarnaum Gegnerschaft, die bis zur Passion anhält und sich zum Todesurteil verhärtet (ab Mk 2:1–3:6).

Diese Doppeldeutigkeit eines bevollmächtigten und zugleich leidenden Herrschers aus dem Handwerkerstand erzeugen die mitagierenden Rollen, und zwar stellvertretend für den Leser. Die Jünger lassen sich aus dem Volk berufen. Aus ihnen geht der symbolische Zwölferkreis hervor. Die Streitfrage der frühen Redaktionsgeschichte, ob die Gemeinde sich nur mit dem Zwölferkreis identifizieren solle oder auch mit den anderen Jüngern, ist für die neue Redaktionsgeschichte erledigt. Die Identifikation soll mit allen Nachfolgern erfolgen, also auch mit den JüngerInnen und mit den kleinen Charakteren aus dem Volk (Lehnert 1999; Shiner 1995; Dormeyer 2002). Das Unverständnis dieser breiten, sehr unterschiedlichen Jüngerschar wird entsprechend differenziert im Mk-Ev entwickelt (Breytenbach 1984, 335–340; Stühlmeyer 2004, 87–121).

Auch die Rolle des Volkes wird zunehmend stärker beachtet. Das

Volk erweist sich als ambivalent unverständlich. Es folgt Jesus in unterschiedlicher Nähe begeistert nach, ohne aber zu einem dauerhaften Vertrauensglauben oder gar zu einem Bekenntnisglauben zu gelangen. So können die feindlichen Hohenpriester während der Passion das Volk von Jesus abwerben. Das Volk ist für die Sympathisanten und die Randmitglieder der Gemeinde ein differenziertes Identifikationsangebot (Williams 1994).

Die Rolle der Gegner wird ebenfalls narrativ entfaltet. Die Gegner agieren ambivalent. Sie beschließen schon früh den Tod Jesu (Mk 3:6), doch setzen sie ihn für ein Jahr oder länger nicht in die Tat um. Statt dessen anerkennen sie die vollmächtigen Taten und Auslegungen Jesu und fragen wiederholt nach der Herkunft seiner Vollmacht. Ihre zunehmende Verhärtung im Unverständnis führt dann schließlich zur Festnahme Jesu, zum Todesurteil und zur Kreuzigung (Kampling 1992, 195ff.). Der bekennende Hauptmann am Kreuz zeigt die Möglichkeit zur Umkehr an (Söding 1985). Die Gegner bilden für Gegnergruppen innerhalb und außerhalb der Gemeinde Identifikationsangebote. Es geht nicht nur um die Aburteilung historischer Gegner, die dann stellvertretend für Gegner außerhalb der Gemeinde stehen, sondern auch um die Warnung an die aktuellen Gegner innerhalb der Gemeinde.

Neue Redaktionsgeschichte, Erzähltextanalyse, historische Erzähl- und Gattungsanalyse sind sich in diesen Ergebnissen weitgehend einig.

6. Schluss

Umstritten bleibt, in welcher methodischen Breite das Mk-Ev gelesen werden soll. Hierzu lässt sich abschließend sagen, dass jede Methode einen berechtigten, gleichursprünglichen Zugang zur Botschaft des Mk-Ev hat (Wegenast 1999, 236). Nur im Zusammenwirken aller Zugänge entsteht eine historische Gesamtplausibilität des Mk-Ev für den Leser.

Lassen Sie mich dazu Arthur Schnitzler (1862–1931), und zwar seine *Traumnovelle* von 1926, zitieren.

Wirklichkeit? Fragte er sich—und gewahrte in diesem Augenblick, ganz nahe dem Antlitz Albertines auf dem benachbartem, auf seinem Polster etwas Dunkles, Abgegrenztes, wie die umschatteten Linien eines menschlichen Gesichts (1926, 91).

Es handelt sich um die Maske, die der Protagonist Fridolin, ein wohlstauer Arzt, während eines erotischen Abenteuers in der Nacht davor getragen hatte. Doch hatte er die lebensbedrohlichen Abenteuer, die wie die Träume seiner Frau Albertine seine Ehe gefährdeten, in Realität oder nur in Phantasie erlebt? So frage ich mich als Leser und soll mich auch nach Arthur Schnitzler so fragen. Welche Beweiskraft hat eine Maske, die der Verleiher nicht zurückgefordert hat? War sie ein Geschenk eines Patienten? War sie ein spontaner Kauf? Oder war sie tatsächlich eine nicht zurückgegebene Leihgabe?

Wir Christen haben das Buch „Evangelium nach Markus“, noch genauer das anonyme Buch: „Anfang des Evangeliums Jesu Christi“. Doch welche Beweiskraft hat dieses Buch für die Wirklichkeit des Jesus von Nazaret, des Gesalbten? Handelt es sich um einen gefährlichen Traum mit gewaltsamen Tod?—Albertine träumt einen Jesus Christus—Traum von ihrem Mann Fridolin und verletzt ihn zutiefst durch das Erzählen dieses Traumes, in dem Fridolin wegen seiner ehelichen Treue gekreuzigt wird (58–64).

Oder handelt es sich im ersten Evangelium um eine Wirklichkeit mit starker Realität göttlichen Handelns, um eine theologisch-pragmatische Geschichtsdarstellung, so wie es nach den Supranaturalisten des 19. und 20. Jh. „gewesen ist“ und wie es ein kriminalistischer Leser für die *Traumnovelle* rekonstruieren wird (vgl. den Hollywood-Film: „Eyes wide shut“).

Oder handelt es sich um eine Wirklichkeit mit „schwacher“ Realität göttlichen Handelns, um eine pathetische Geschichtsdarstellung, die zeigt, wie es unter Einbezug von Träumen und Glauben für den einzelnen Hörer/Leser gewesen sein könnte (Moxter 2004). Die Eheleute Fridolin und Albertine sind verführbar und wir sind gleich nach den ersten Worten des Markusevangeliums Verführte, die eines Boten, dessen Botschaft und eines nachfolgenden Herrn und seines neuen Weges zur Umkehr bedürfen (Mk 1:2–3, 4–15). Wenn es dem Markusevangelium weiterhin gelingt, noch immer existentiell zu verletzen, indem es uns als Verführte bloßstellt, und gerade dadurch uns neue Handlungsmöglichkeiten zu eröffnen, dann haben alle gegenwärtigen Auslegungswege recht. Sie erschließen auf literarischer und theologischer Ebene den gefährlichen Traum dieses ersten Evangeliums und ermöglichen zugleich die plausible Rückfrage nach den historischen Vorgängen (Lategan/Vorster 1985).

Alle diese unterschiedlichen Auslegungen reden aber nicht mit einer Zunge, sondern mit der geistgegebenen Vielfalt der Inter-

pretationen. Wenn schon zwei Eheleute ihre Liebe mit ihren Träumen wie in der *Traumnovelle* gefährden, aneinander vorbeireden und gerade dadurch ihrer Liebe im verflochtenen 7. Jahr eine neue Dynamik und einen neuen Halt geben, dann gehört das Aneinandervorbeireden und doch aufeinander Hören notwendig zur Auslegung des Evangeliums und seiner christologischen Botschaft. „Die Beziehung (ist) zwischen den einzelnen Methoden nur durch philosophische bzw. theologische Reflexion zu definieren“ und zwar durch die Hermeneutik des Zeugnisses und der Erinnerung—so Petr Pokorný beim Prager Symposium 2001 (Pokorný 2002, 2f.). Ladislav Hejdánek erläutert dazu, dass das hermeneutische Verfahren der Zeit bedarf; „erstens ist es die eigene Zeitlichkeit dieses Aktes, aber zweitens ist es die Zeitlichkeit dessen, was zu deuten, zu interpretieren ist“ (Hejdánek 2002, 46ff.). Das Markusevangelium schildert ein öffentliches, einmaliges Lebensschicksal mit einer angekommenen und sich öffnenden Zukunft Gottes und erlaubt uns in einem nie abschließenden Dialog und Kampf der Methoden und Interpretationen den Zutritt zu seiner neuen Wirklichkeit (Ricoeur 1974, 68–73; McKnight 1988).

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THE CHRONOTOPE AND ITS DISCURSIVE FUNCTION IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Bettina Fischer

ABSTRACT

Bakhtinian theory offers an alternative set of questions to those set out by the model that has been used to prove that the canonical gospels are ancient biographies or *bioi*. Demonstrating that the Gospel of Luke diverges from the *bios* model in some respects, this essay also shows that there are aspects in this text that the model does not address. Part of a larger investigation of the Gospel of Luke in the light of Bakhtinian theory, this essay focuses on the *chronotope*, the time-space arrangement, in Bakhtin's terms. Not only does Bakhtin see the chronotope as discursive and indicative of genre, but he also draws attention to a cluster of features that accompanies a particular chronotope, the motif of *meeting* being of particular interest. Tracing the motif of meeting in the Gospel of Luke, the essay suggests that the primary discourse of this text is underpinned by its chronotope, first rooting itself in the discourse of the Hebrew Bible as practiced in the time of the text's setting, to then diverge from it, entering into a dialogic relationship with the older canon and the religious establishment, to finally challenge the latter on its own ground in preparation of disseminating itself in the wider world.

1. *Introduction*

A view that has found increasing popularity in recent years amongst biblical scholars is that the canonical Gospels are ancient biographies or *bioi*. Proponents of the *bios*-hypothesis begin their argument by opposing the view that the Gospels are *Kleinliteratur* and *sui generis*—a theory put forward by form and redaction criticism.¹ Rather, they

¹ Rudolf Bultmann, Martin Dibelius (Form Criticism) and Hans Conzelmann (Redaction Criticism), and others.

contend, the Gospels, as texts almost certainly produced by self-conscious authors, should not be seen as divorced from other texts in the Graeco-Roman literary environment. Richard Burridge, in his book, *What are the Gospels: A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, has selected a number of ancient texts that he has identified as *bioi* on the basis of a family resemblance made up of shared features to construct a model of this genre. He came to the conclusion that all four canonical Gospels are *bioi* on the basis of this model.

Although the Gospel of Luke shares a number of the features that make up Burridge's model for *bioi*, it does also diverge from this model in significant aspects. For instance, unlike what Burridge claims to be standard for *bioi*, the name of the protagonist does not appear at the beginning of the narrative.² Nor does the word *bios* appear in either the title or the opening of the text. The prologue does state an intention but it is not that of writing the life of Jesus. Nor does this narrative end with Jesus' death and consequences, as, for instance, a burial, funeral oration, or other honours.³ Instead, we see a resurrection, a time of teaching and an ascension. The third, and perhaps the most significant difference between the Gospel and a *bios*, as presented by the model, is the depiction of the heavy intervention by supernatural forces in the story. While *bioi* may show signs, omens, and even, in some instances, appearances of the departed hero to his followers, these cannot be compared to phenomena in the Gospel of Luke like the scene in the desert between Jesus and the devil, the casting out of demons (who speak), the appearances of the angels (who also speak), the Transfiguration, the Resurrection and the Ascension.⁴

² Burridge (1992, 133–134, 160–162).

³ Cf. Burridge (1992, 139–141, 178–181). Burridge cites Suetonius as recording a *praetor* seeing Augustus ascend into heaven. The noteworthy difference between that and what happens in the Gospel of Luke is that Suetonius cites the *ex-praetor* (hearsay) and does not say that it happened, while the Gospel narrator states that the events leading up to and including the Ascension actually happened (Suetonius 1957, 111).

⁴ Another example is Plutarch's *Alexander* (although it is not one of Burridge's example texts, the birth of Alexander does invite a comparison with that of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke). As is the case in Suetonius' text, the supernatural occurrences in this text are also always qualified either by happening in a dream, or by being introduced by phrases like "it is said", "others say", "Eratosthenes says", and "others again say". Never does the narrator say that these things actually happened (Plutarch 1910, 463–464). In Luke, on the other hand, the supernatural occurrences are not qualified either by the framework of a dream or by hearsay.

Burridge emphasizes that the *bios*-genre as such is flexible. Surrounded by a number of other genres it frequently happens, so he argues, that a particular *bios* overlaps with one or other neighbouring genre. In this way, he explains the various divergences from his model in the example texts that he has selected to construct it. A couple of divergences on the part of the Gospel of Luke are thus not seen by him as a problem, especially as one or other of the other three Gospels do comply with some of the points in which Luke diverges (Burridge 1992, 195, 206)!⁵

The problem with this kind of thinking in classifying a text is that a neighbouring genre may in fact be the main genre of that text, the *bios*-genre moving to the position of the neighbour (in turn explaining the divergences in the text from the primary genre). In fact, in applying the *bios* model to a text of such a neighbouring genre, namely, the Greek Romance,⁶ *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, by Chariton, it was found that this romance, too, is a *bios* by the criteria of Burridge's model.⁷ There are some differences, but these are less significant and fewer in number than the differences between the Gospel of Luke and the *bios* model. As few would argue that there is no difference between an ancient biography and a romance, this experiment implies that there are gaps in the *bios* model. Answers to questions that are not addressed in it could well make a difference to the assessment of a text's genre.

Clearly another set of questions needs to be asked to distinguish a *bios* from a romance text. Significantly, there is no discussion of the high incidence of the involvement of the supernatural world in Burridge's assessment of the Gospels. In considering the similarities of the Gospel of Luke with *Chaereas and Callirhoe* in terms of this supernatural involvement, and in terms of the happy ending of the narrative, a review of the genre of the Gospel of Luke as an ancient biography or *bios* would not be out of place.⁸ Whatever emerges from this would have an effect on the interpretation of its discourse.

⁵ Burridge discusses the three Synoptics as a group, as opposed to this essay, which is part of an investigation dealing with Luke as a text in its own right.

⁶ See Burridge's diagram of neighbouring genres to *bios* (1992, 66).

⁷ See Fischer (2004, 170–173).

⁸ Susan Marie Praeder (1981) put forward the opinion in 1981 that the Gospel of Luke can be seen in the light of a Greek Romance.

2. *Bakhtinian theory*

The theories of the Russian scholar, Mikhail Bakhtin, offer a different set of criteria in approaching a narrative text. Primary questions would include the following considerations: is the text in question part of the mainstream literature of its time? Does it challenge a worldview, a mainstream discourse or other genres, as opposed to only recounting and extolling (or vilifying) the life and actions of a particular person, as would be the case in a *bios*?⁹ In other words, does the text interact dialogically with either its socio-political environment and/or with other texts? Thirdly, does it contain carnivalistic inversions as a means of propagating a particular discourse? And, fourthly, how are time and space (the *chronotope*, in Bakhtin's terminology) represented in it? Although all these aspects of Bakhtin's theory are interlinked, the aspect of the chronotope in the Gospel of Luke will be focussed on for the purposes of this essay in an attempt to assess its form and thus the discourse that underlies it.

2.1. *Chronotope*

In his discussion of the chronotope, Bakhtin traces the way the problem of representing historical time and space in literature has been met at various stages. In 1937–8 he wrote the following:

We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, “time space”) to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature (Bakhtin 1981, 84).

Bakhtin sees the chronotope of a text as determinative of genre. In his view it is far more than a technical device. It is a major constituent of the text as a whole. As such, Bakhtin sees it as a formally constitutive category of literature, determining the genre of a text and the way in which the human image is presented in it.

⁹ Burridge does list a number of possible authorial purposes for *bioi*: encomiastic, exemplary, informative, entertainment, preserving memory, didactic, apologetic and polemic (1992, 149–152). However, the main thrust of all of these would pertain to an aspect of the life of the person described. Even the last two on the list, apologetic and polemic, do not reach the extent and depth of the kind of discourse that a Bakhtinian exploration would try to reveal, a discourse that is served by the character rather than the other way round.

The chronotope in literature has an intrinsic *generic* significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time. The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic (Bakhtin 1981, 84–85; Bakhtin's *italics*).

Bakhtin suggests that the chronotope of a given text is never neutral. It is inextricably bound to an evaluating voice. It is discursive. Each motif carries an evaluative factor as it is linked to the chronotope.

A literary work's artistic unity in relationship to an actual reality is defined by its chronotope. Therefore, the chronotope in a work always contains within it an evaluating aspect that can be isolated from the whole artistic chronotope only in abstract analysis. In literature and art itself, temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always coloured by emotion and values. Abstract thought can, of course, think time and space as separate entities and conceive them as things apart from emotions and values that attach to them. But *living* artistic perception (which also of course involves thought, but not abstract thought) makes no such divisions and permits no such segmentation. It seizes on the chronotope in all its wholeness and fullness. Art and literature are shot through with *chronotopic values* of varying degree and scope. Each motif, each separate aspect of artistic work bears value (Bakhtin 1981, 243; Bakhtin's *italics*).

Bakhtin demonstrates part of this theory on the genre of the Greek Romance in his essay, *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel* (Bakhtin 1981, 84–258).¹⁰ According to him, the time-space arrangement in texts of this particular genre functions according to a combination of “biographical time” and “adventure time” in “abstract-alien space”. The narrative begins in “biographical time” (when boy meets girl) and *ends in it* (when the lovers are finally reunited). Between these two points, the lovers are plunged into one ordeal after another in “adventure time”. Each new adventure is introduced by words or phrases, like “just at that time”, “suddenly”, “unexpectedly,” “some time later”, and works according to its own clock, but were these

¹⁰ The chronotope described here applies to what Bakhtin refers to as the “adventure novel of ordeal”, the five romances that classicists refer to as the canon of the ancient novel: Chariton, *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Xenophon, *An Ephesian Story*, Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, Heliodorus, *An Ethiopian Story*.

adventures to be added up they would not fit into the biographical time at the beginning and at the end of the story. Thus, when the lovers are reunited at the end of the story they are in the same state as they were at the beginning, completely unaffected by the ordeals (some of which are simply horrific) and the passing of time. Not only are they in the same state as they were when they first met, but also at the same age. "Adventure time" facilitates supernatural intervention, the latter precipitating the different episodes as they interrupt the flow of "biographical time". The primary goddess whom the protagonists appeal to is Aphrodite, while fate or Tyche is represented as the opposing force. There can be any number of episodes in this kind of time arrangement, as these have no effect on the biographical progression or on the outcome of the story.

Concomitant with "adventure time" is the space in which the episodes take place, described by Bakhtin as "abstract-alien space". Like time this space is used to suit each adventure. The heroes have no deeper integral connection with it. What matters is that it suits the needs of the particular adventure, distance playing a major role as the protagonists struggle to reach each other while circumstances and Tyche conspire to keep them apart.¹¹

3. *The Chronotope in the Gospel of Luke*

Looking at the Gospel of Luke, one finds a chronotope that can be compared to Bakhtin's description of that of the Greek Romance, the angel Gabriel's appearance to the priest, Zechariah, being the supernatural intervention that precipitates the switch from biographical to adventure time. This would be in line with the episodic and varied nature of the narrative as a whole. Episodes of differing genres stand side by side without difficulty, such as Jesus and the devil in the desert (Luke 4:1–13) and Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30). Here, too, the intervention of supernatural forces precipitates different episodes, each episode working according to the

¹¹ I have applied Bakhtin's description of the genre of the Greek Romance to *Chaereas and Callirhoe* in my doctoral thesis and have found that this Greek Romance complies with Bakhtin's criteria for what he calls the "adventure novel of ordeal" (Fischer 2004, 17–32).

time and space that it requires for its own particular purpose. After the Resurrection, when biographical time has set in again, Jesus, like the heroes of the Greek Romance, shows almost no sign of, or ageing caused by the horrific suffering he has undergone. We do see the marks on his hands, but these are there for the purpose of identification.¹²

3.1. *The Kingdoms*

The comparative use of the romance, *Chaereas and Callirhoe* serves to illuminate a particular use of space that is a central concern in the Gospel of Luke. The idea of two different kingdoms is revealed by an investigation of the chronotope. In *Chaereas and Callirhoe* we see two geographical kingdoms: Syracuse, which can be described as ideal and utopian, and Persia, which is less so, the heroes experiencing most of their ordeals there before they return back home to Syracuse. In the Gospel we find two metaphysical kingdoms engaged in a battle between good and evil, this battle being responsible for the dramatic tension underlying this text. The coming Kingdom of God is opposed by the forces of the kingdom of Satan. This is not apparent at the beginning of the narrative, however. Instead, the reader is first presented with representatives of the Kingdom of God in an exciting and colourful set of events, not aware that this is a view into the camp of one side of the battle that lies ahead. The presence of the other kingdom is hinted at to begin with in the Songs of Zechariah and Mary, which resonate with images of the battle between the warrior king, Yahweh, of the Hebrew Bible and the forces that oppose him. In the Gospel the presence of the opposing kingdom comes into full view in the form of the devil as the latter tempts Jesus (Luke 4:1–13), even though the scene is deceptively gentle when compared to the Hebrew Bible scenes of the Lord's action (as shown, for example in Zechariah 9–13). The battle, having once surfaced in this scene between the primary representatives of the two kingdoms, returns to just below the surface of

¹² It is of interest to note that Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion of the Christ*, which shows extreme disfigurement of Jesus' person as a result of the assault committed on him, gives a final image of him restored to the state in which he appeared in the form of the flashbacks to times before the Passion.

the narrative. An awareness of its presence having been created, it is apparent throughout, manifesting itself in the demons and in the people who oppose Jesus. It erupts fully at Jesus' Trial and Passion.

4. *Features concomitant with the chronotope of adventure time and alien-abstract space*

Bakhtin identifies features that accompany the chronotope of "adventure time" and "abstract-alien space", such as the characterization of the heroes, which he calls the "image of man", and a particular cluster of motifs. In his view, the heroes embody the main idea or discourse that is tested and propagated in this kind of text. In the Greek Romance, this discourse is the testing of the endurance of romantic love in the face of all hardships to eventually turn into everlasting marital love. The protagonists do not show any development of character. On the contrary, any change of character would signal the failure of the idea they embody. All the ordeals that confront them test their ability to withstand assaults on their integrity. The two lovers (joint protagonists) undergo many adventures of separation, near-deaths and attacks on their chastity. Finally, they are re-united, publicly acclaimed as having been chaste, true to their identity and to each other, to then live happily ever after. This marks the triumph of romantic love, of which they are the embodiment.¹³

4.1. *The depiction of the protagonist, Jesus, in the Gospel of Luke*

Turning to the Gospel, we see the protagonist, Jesus, encountering many diverse ordeals on the journey of his mission. He embodies

¹³ Cf. some views put forward by classicists on the portrayal of character in the Greek Romance. Anderson notes that the major characters in the ancient novels tend to be lacking everything except perfection, but that individual authors were abler than others in portraying their characters. The plots are responsible for this type of characterization, in his view, as the heroes are first lovers, then intriguers, and lastly, characters (Anderson 1984, 62–72). He sees Chaereas as a character that owes much to New Comedy (Anderson 1982, 14). Reardon, in commenting on the characters in *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, describes the characters in the ancient novel as "romance types". The heroine, hapless and beautiful, and the hero, handsome and rather passive, are idealized. The other characters are often more realistic, such as the rascally brigand, the resourceful slave, the faithful friend and the anxious parents (Reardon 1991, 26). Bakhtin's assessment of character in this genre is not so much concerned about the character itself but on the function the heroes perform in embodying the concept they embody.

the coming kingdom of God, which is the central idea or discourse, the validity of which is tested and propagated in this text. Having been introduced by the angel Gabriel as the son of the most high he retains this identity until the end when he ascends to his heavenly father. Like his counterparts in the Greek Romance, he does not go through any character development. Instead, he overcomes all ordeals staying true to himself and his mission in the face of all assaults on his person. The triumph of his identity marks the triumph of the concept of the Kingdom of God.

5. *Common motifs in the Greek Romance*

Motifs associated by Bakhtin with the Greek Romance, which functions according to *adventure time* in *abstract-alien* space, are love that engenders new life, the celebratory meal, weddings, funerals, crucifixion, near-deaths, the empty tomb, miraculous escapes, mistaken identities, and others.¹⁴ Most of these can also be traced in the Gospel of Luke.

6. *Chronotope as discourse in the Gospel of Luke*

As has been mentioned above, Bakhtin sees the chronotope of a text discursive in itself, the overriding motif being that of *meeting*.¹⁵ If we now look at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, we see the meeting

¹⁴ All of these motifs are linked to what Bakhtin sees as the movement of birth, life, death and rebirth of carnival, which he sees as the common feature to diverse texts of the Graeco-Roman body of literature that he calls the Menippea. He sees the Greek Romance and early Christian texts with the Menippea (Bakhtin 1884, 113–118). Most of my description of Bakhtin's theory of carnival is taken from *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984), as this is the book in which he describes the carnivalesque nature of the Socratic Dialogue and the Menippea, genres that are relevant to the Gospel of Luke, having been in existence for some time when the latter made its appearance. Although this is one of Bakhtin's early works, a work that was first published in 1929, before he had written his Rabelais book in 1940 (in which he locates the heyday of carnival in medieval and Renaissance culture), it is fundamental to his understanding of the carnivalesque worldview in relation to literature. He revised and expanded this book for its second edition in 1961, well after he wrote his book on Rabelais. Revisionary notes, entitled *Towards a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book* are also included in this edition as Appendix II. Other works have also been consulted, but to a lesser extent.

¹⁵ Bakhtin (1981, 97–98).

between the angel Gabriel first with Zechariah and then with Mary. And, if and we consider the central discourse of this text to be the propagation and testing of the coming Kingdom of God, then we can trace this discourse as it first roots itself, not only into the tradition in the form of the discourse of the Hebrew Bible, but also into the central place of worship of that tradition, the Temple in Jerusalem. Simultaneously thus we see the use of space in the sense of a tradition and in the sense of a geographical location. The annunciation of John fits into this space, having been carefully grafted to the older discourse via all the miraculous birth stories that appear in the Hebrew canon. The effect is one of legitimisation, not only of the new text and its discourse, but also, specifically of John, who will in turn legitimize Jesus. With the annunciation of Jesus, the discourse, having once rooted itself, begins to diverge. Gabriel's meeting with Mary takes place, not only outside the Temple but also outside Judea. This meeting differs radically from John's annunciation and those of his canonical predecessors. The reason for Mary's childlessness is her virginity, as opposed to old age and barrenness. She is not asked to be a messenger for the divine plan, but the locus through which the messiah enters this world. Going on from there, we see Jesus being baptized (again accompanied by divine action) outside the establishment of the Temple, the river Jordan calling up associations with the Hebrew Bible figures of Elisha and Naaman (an outsider) (2 Kgs 5:8–14). Jesus preaches in Galilee, first in *synagogues* (in the establishment of the Pharisees) and then in *private houses*. The Transfiguration takes place on a *mountain*, during which the Hebrew Bible figures Moses and Elijah actually appear, once again by divine intervention. Jesus then preaches more and more on the *road*.

The road as a meeting place is of primary importance for the discourse of the Gospel of Luke, standing in opposition to the Temple. While the road is open and free from social hierarchy, symbolizing movement, the Temple stands for hierarchy and stasis. Jesus (embodying the new discourse) returns to the Temple for his final confrontation. He clears this space of the traders, preaches his discourse in it and finally undergoes his most radical test in his trial in the locations of current worldly power, the palace of the High priest, then in front of Pontius Pilate, then in Herod's palace, then back with Pilate. His most severe ordeal occurs outside the city. Like the heroes in the romance, he finally returns home to his Father, having

overcome every ordeal with his integrity intact, vindicated by divine means in terms of his being by his resurrection and ascension.

In this essay, I have only highlighted one aspect of how Bakhtinian theory can be applied to the Gospel of Luke to discover how narrative strategy is used to propagate a particular discourse. Other related aspects are the use of carnivalisms and the intertextual dialogue with older texts as well as with prevailing socio-political realities. Bakhtin considers both the Greek Romance and early Christian texts as part of the *Menippea* of Graeco-Roman times. Heavily informed by a carnivalistic worldview, these texts make use of invention, the creation of carnivalistic doubles and intertextual conversations with other text. The discourse of the Gospel of Luke makes use of texts from the Hebrew Bible (the canon of the society of the setting) as a source, a legitimization for itself and as a discourse to diverge from. Its chronotope is expressive of this discursive movement. The final space of the discourse is the Gospel text itself, set to be disseminated throughout the world.

7. Conclusion

I have begun my essay by showing that the Gospel of Luke does not fit fully into the *bios* model in spite of many affinities. The opening contains neither the word *bios* nor the name of the protagonist. The narrative does not end with the death of Jesus and its consequences but with the ascension. This draws attention to the many supernatural occurrences presented in this text, an aspect that is not addressed in the *bios* model. The element of the supernatural and the happy ending is reminiscent of the Greek Romance. The chronotope of adventure time in abstract alien space facilitates the representation of heavenly intervention, which determines the story line. Other parallels, such as the intertextual dialogue and the many carnivalisms are beyond the constraints of this paper. These have been discussed in detail elsewhere.¹⁶ The chronotopic reading shows that the time-space arrangement of this text underpins the movement of the central discourse as it first roots itself in the Hebrew canon,

¹⁶ Fischer (2004, 49–93, 94–143).

diverges from it, coming back with new strength to challenge it on its own ground. The narrative opens in the Temple with representatives of God's people (Zechariah and Elizabeth) and ends in the Temple with representatives of God's people (the disciples of Jesus).

I would like to put forward the opinion that a reading of the Gospel of Luke as a *bios* in terms of Burrige's model misses the full intricacy of the narrative strategies, as well as the radical nature of the discourse of this text. A reading of it as a romance-like text, liberated from the constraints of historicity and verisimilitude allows for the use of free invention for the purpose of fully testing the central idea, namely the viability of the concept of the coming Kingdom of God. This reading easily accommodates the supernatural dimension of this text, its dialogic use of the Hebrew canon and the carnivalisms that challenge the old discourse to make way for the new.

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THE POWER OF THE ABSENT FATHER:
A SOCIO-RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF
1 CORINTHIANS 4:14–5:13

Charles A. Wanamaker

ABSTRACT

In this paper I argue that the rhetorical situation that Paul confronted in writing 1 Corinthians required him first to re-establish his authority with the Corinthian Christian community before turning to deal with the serious ethical problem found in ch. 5. Much of Paul's argument in 1 Cor 1–4 is directed to this purpose, culminating in the metaphorical elaboration of the ancient household in 4:14–21 where Paul portrays himself as an absent father, his competitors for authority as guides and disciplinarians under his authority, and the Corinthians themselves as his children, some of whom were in need of disciplinary intervention. Having ideologically established the basis of his authority, particularly through the hierarchical dominance inscribed in the father-children metaphor in 1 Cor 4:4–21, Paul turns in 5:1–13 to deal with a serious ethical breach within the community. The paper throughout focuses on the argumentative character of Paul's rhetoric and especially on the connection between the argument in chs. 1–4 and Paul's rhetorical intervention in ch. 5 where he seeks to impose his disciplinary decision on the Corinthians with regard to a member of the community who openly engaged in gross immorality.

1. *Introduction*¹

Writing almost 40 years ago, Dahl (1967, 316) claimed that no certainty had been reached regarding the relation of 1 Corinthians 1–4

¹ It gives me great pleasure to offer this essay as a token of the esteem and appreciation that I have for Professor Bernard Lategan, both as a scholar and as a person. I have long considered Professor Lategan to be the doyen of New Testament studies in my adopted homeland of South Africa and have benefited immensely both from his scholarship and his friendship.

and the remainder of the letter. In an attempt to resolve this problem Dahl (1967, 329) himself argued that 1 Cor 1:10–4:21 was an apostolic apology and functioned within the structure of the letter “to overcome both false appraisals and false objections (regarding Paul), and to re-establish his apostolic authority as the founder and spiritual father of the whole church at Corinth” (my italics). Dahl (1967, 329–331) further claimed that the issues dealt with in chapters 5–6 were closely related to the criticism of Paul’s apostolic ministry and the factionalism that developed as a result of controversies around Paul among the believers in Corinth.

In one of the first major rhetorical studies of 1 Corinthians, Mitchell (1992, 16, n. 54) explicitly rejected Dahl’s view that 1 Cor 1–4 served as an apostolic apology. She claimed that 1 Corinthians is a piece of deliberative rhetoric and that 1 Cor 1:18–4:21 serves as a “prelude” to the specific advice that characterizes the three proof sections found in chapters 5–15 by censuring “the foolishness of the Corinthians’ factional behaviour”, while demonstrating Paul’s apostolic *ethos* as the Corinthians’ proper adviser and the recipients’ need for his advice (1992, 209–210). “Apostolic *ethos* as an adviser” seems to come some way short of Dahl’s understanding of the first section establishing Paul’s authority.

Castelli (1991, 91–111) has argued that Paul used the language of imitation and the father metaphor in 4:14–21 in a coercive manner to re-establish his authority with the Corinthians and force them to become self-regulating. Against this Witherington (1995, 145) claims that “Paul believes that his role and status are established by God”, and thus 1 Cor 1–4 cannot be “an *apologia* or an attempt to re-establish a lost authority”. Witherington implies that such an act would be beneath Paul’s dignity and opposed to his high ethical/theological stand. Given (2001, 94–95), however, is correct to criticize Witherington for his failure to recognize that without re-establishing his authority Paul could not hope to solve the problems that existed in the Christian community at Corinth, beginning with the problem discussed in chapter 5.

In this paper I will argue with Dahl, Castelli, and Given, among others, that Paul first seeks to re-establish his authority in 1 Cor 1:18–4:21 before in chapter 5 turning to specific issues whose solution hinge on whether the Corinthians accept his instruction (not merely his advice as Mitchell would have us to understand) as the founder and mediator of Christ to the community. As we shall see,

1 Cor 4:14–21 is the culmination of one important line of argument in chapters 1–4 and plays a key rhetorical role in the apostle's attempt to re-establish his authority before turning to an attempt to assert his authority regarding a serious moral problem in the community in chapter 5. The focus of the paper will be particularly on the argumentative character of Paul's discourse throughout 1 Cor 1–5.

2. *The authority of the absent father*

In a recent paper I argued that “Paul's rhetoric in 1 Cor 1:10–4:21 functions ideologically to reassert his power in the Corinthian Christian community”, a community riven by factionalism and concomitant challenges to Paul's own authority (Wanamaker 2003, 116). While I do not have time to repeat the full argument of that paper, one point has considerable bearing on the connection between 1:10–4:21 and chapter 5. Paul on several occasions engages in the narrativization of the origins of the Corinthian Christian community and associates himself with God's saving activity in his initial proclamation of Christ crucified. Each time he does so, he re-inscribes his own position as the unique founder-progenitor of the community, thus legitimating his unique position of authority with respect to the community.²

In 1:10–17 Paul sets out the rhetorical exigency of the letter. Visitors from Corinth had reported to him that quarrels had arisen in the community leading to divisions within it, apparently around allegiances to external leaders such as Paul, Apollos, and Peter. In 1:17 Paul recounts his role in the founding of the church by claiming that he did not come on his own accord to the church but that he was commissioned (*ἀπέστειλεν*), like a prophet, by the church's highest authority, Christ himself, to proclaim the gospel to the Corinthians. Castelli (1991, 98–99) recognizes that this is “a clever rhetorical gesture” by Paul because it grants to him a “privileged status *vis-à-vis* the gospel” by claiming a unique authority as the one

² On narrativization as an ideological tool see Thompson (1990, 61–62). Narrativization allows for the assertion of legitimacy through stories about the past. Such stories “serve to justify the exercise of power by those who possess it” while at the same time reconciling those without power to their lack of it. Paul's use of God and Christ to authorize his past action of proclaiming the gospel to the Corinthians seems to fit with what Thompson has in mind.

through whom Christ chose to speak to the Corinthians, while at the same time removing him from the competition for factional loyalty. In founding the church, Paul simply acted as the official agent of Christ, thus putting himself beyond criticism or competition. This point is subtly and not so subtly underscored on several occasions in 1:18–4:21.

Almost immediately in 1:21–25 Paul uses an associative argument to reiterate his unique status in relation to the Corinthians. Paul identifies God's wisdom as having decided to use his proclamation of Christ crucified to save those who believed in Corinth. This argument associates Paul with God as the source of the saving wisdom that transcends and in fact stands in radical contrast to human wisdom, and with Christ who Paul describes as both the power and wisdom of God. Winter (2002, 141–202) has convincingly shown that the human wisdom that Paul rejects in 1 Cor 1–4 is that of the sophistic tradition with its emphasis on rhetorical eloquence.

The connection between God and Paul, and the antithesis between divine wisdom and human wisdom is carried forward in 2:1–5 where Paul again narrativizes by emphasizing the manner of his founding proclamation of Christ crucified when he came to the Corinthians, and by associating himself and his preaching with the demonstration of the Spirit and power that led to the conversion of the Corinthians in the first place.³ Paul's dominant position in relation to his Corinthian converts is further asserted in 2:6–16 as Paul creates "a legitimating rationalization to explain his own position of dominance over the Corinthians" (Wanamaker 2003, 129). He has received the gift of divine revelation and the gift of the Spirit of God for the discerning of divine gifts (2:10–12), and he possesses the mind of Christ (2:16), but he could not impart such spiritual things to the Corinthians because like a parent judging his children's development he decided that their spiritual immaturity and their factionousness precluded him from feeding them with strong spiritual food (3:1–4). Thus, Paul's position of spiritual superiority and dominance

³ Chester (2003, 83) argues that Paul "downplays his own contribution" to the conversion of the Corinthians. This is not altogether the case as Given (2001, 95–99) shows. Paul chose the style and content of proclamation that he adopted in his missionary work among the Corinthians, implying that he could have preached more powerfully and presented a more sophisticated version of his message, had the situation in Corinth warranted it.

in his relation with the Corinthians is repeatedly emphasized through 2:1–3:4, and this continues with the planting and building metaphors in 3:5–15 where Paul subtly stresses his role as community founder through his application of the planter and master builder metaphors. In both these metaphors, Paul locates himself in the initiating role. Culturally both the planter and the master builder were associated with knowledge and wisdom that made them authoritative in their practice and management of their respective domains. People watering the seed planted by the planter and building on the foundations laid by the master builder would have been understood as hierarchically subordinate.⁴ Thus, even the metaphors help construct a discourse in which Paul's authority and dominant position is foregrounded.

The line of reasoning which repetitively stresses Paul's authority and legitimate domination over the community as its founder and as the one who receives his authority from God and Christ Jesus culminates in 4:14–21. In these verses Paul employs a set of interconnected metaphors drawn from the cultural domain of the household to make explicit what he has implied throughout 1:10–4:13: he has a unique relation with the Corinthian Christians based on the fact that he was the first to bring the gospel to them and as a result of this he has a right to direct their moral and social behaviour within the household of the church. In terms of socio-rhetorical analysis this clearly marks off the discourse in 4:14–21 as wisdom based discourse since the wisdom rhetorolect is concerned with "the relation of humans to one another as a result of the relation of God to the created world and to humans" (Robbins 2002, 31). Paul as a consequence of his apostolic role as the agent of Christ in founding the community claims a father-like relation with the Corinthians. Parent-child relations are a primary topic of wisdom discourse as is honour-shame which also plays a role in 4:18–21 (Robbins 2002, 31).

⁴ My views here are derived from the work of one of my PhD students, Reverend Suraj Komaravalli, on the metaphors in 1 Cor 1–4 and Shanor (1988, 461–471) who has shown that the ἀρχιτέκτων was responsible for overseeing the work of the other builders. The differentiation between Paul and other workers is particularly stressed in the elaboration of the master builder metaphor since those who build on Paul's foundation will be judged by their work. But Paul as the master builder and layer of the foundations stands outside this judgement. This can only be because Paul views his own role in creating the community as beyond contestation since he has done so under a divine mandate where others may not have been similarly commissioned.

The initial basis of the father-child metaphor complex is obvious. Paul as the founder of the community can claim to have fathered or “procreated” the community through the gospel, as he does in 4:16 (διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς ἐγέννησα), and this leads him to refer to his converts as “my beloved children” (τέκνα μου ἀγαπητά) in v. 14. Thus Paul as the “metaphorical” procreator of the community encourages his auditors to blend their knowledge of what everyday fathers are like and what they do, with his role in the creation and “rearing” of his family, the Christian community in Corinth.

Trevor Burke (2003, 100–105) has identified five characteristics of the “normal social expectations of father-child relations in antiquity”. According to him, “Undergirding every discussion of family life in antiquity is the common assumption that parent-child relations were hierarchical in nature”, with the father at the top of the hierarchy (2003, 100), and closely related to this was the idea of the father’s authority in all matters relating to both minor and adult children.⁵ The authority of the father was understood to require a response of obedience from his offspring (Burke 2003, 102). Fathers were understood to provide moral models for their offspring to imitate and were assumed to be affectionate towards their offspring (2003, 102–104). Finally, fathers were responsible for their offsprings’ moral education, as well as their social and cultural education (2003, 104–105).

Within the context in 4:14–21 each aspect of the traditional social expectations regarding fathers is incorporated into Paul’s argumentative conclusion to the first main section of 1 Corinthians. Paul begins with a non-syllogistic enthymeme from contraries in 4:14 that concerns his rhetorical intention in the previous paragraph of 4:8–13.⁶ He asserts in v. 14 that he has not written to shame the Corinthians

⁵ Obviously this authority did not apply to married daughters who were transferred to the authority of their own husbands or their husband’s family in the event of the husband’s death. In fact, “The power of husbands over their wives can be paralleled with that of the father over his children” (Winter 2003, 17).

⁶ The antecedent of ταῦτα (these things) in 4:14 is not completely clear. Garland (2003, 144–145) suggests that Paul may be referring to the whole of 1:10–4:13 and his attack on the Corinthians’ factionalism which may have served to shame the original readers. This seems unlikely for two reasons. First the immediate context of 4:8–13 provides more than sufficient grounds for Paul to say, οὐκ ἐντρέπων ὑμᾶς γράφω ταῦτα, and second, to think that an unemphatic ταῦτα could refer back to 1:10–17 ignores the oral nature of the letter as a communication act since 1:10–17 is too remote to be meaningful without other connecting clues. Cf. Fee (1987, 184, n. 8).

by what he has said, but (ἀλλά) to admonish them as his “beloved children”. This suggests strongly that 4:8–13, which ironically set out as a series of contraries between his apostolic experience of hardship and lack of social status and the Corinthians’ experience of social well-being and high social status,⁷ functions rhetorically to provide a counter-cultural model that is intended to force the Corinthians to reconsider the values that they have brought into the church from their pre-Christian cultural and social experience. Fitzgerald (1988, 147–148) has shown that *peristasis* catalogues like the one in 4:8–13 function rhetorically for the purpose of exemplification and admonish, and argues that Paul exemplifies servanthood in 4:1–13 and admonishes the Corinthians to imitate him.⁸ Thus, his affection for them is connected with his concern for their Christian moral and social education as would be expected in a father-child relationship. His denial of wishing to make them ashamed should be understood perhaps as a rhetorical denial since Paul’s ironic σύγκρισις between himself and the Corinthians in the *peristasis* catalogue of 4:8–13 should have caused shame to at least some in the community who enjoyed high social status in civil society while Paul and other missionary leaders experienced low status and serious social deprivation according to Ramsaran (1996, 36). He may also be correct when he maintains that the *peristasis* catalogue had the “further function of providing behavioural guidelines for unity and reconciliation (1996, 36).

The first γάρ in 4:15 signals that argumentatively what follows is a rationale. The content of v. 15 indicates that the rationale supports Paul’s right to admonish the Corinthians (v. 14). Ramsaran (1996, 36–37) identifies v. 15a as a maxim reflecting general cultural wisdom regarding the hierarchical relation between fathers and παιδαγωγοί, and is followed by a further supporting reason in v. 15b, as we shall see in relation to the second γάρ in the verse. In terms of Quintilian’s fivefold understanding of the enthymeme in his day, 4:15 represents a non-syllogistic enthymeme.⁹ In the household order

⁷ For an excellent discussion of Paul’s use of contrastive σύγκρισις in this passage see Fitzgerald (1988, 131–148).

⁸ On exemplification and imitation in Paul more generally see Fiore (2003, 228–257, especially 241–242).

⁹ Quintilian (5.10.1–3) recognized five types of enthymemes of which only two were syllogistic in character. His five types have been conveniently summarized by Aune (2003, 149) as follows: “(1) a thought, (2) a maxim supported by a reason (*sententia cum ratione*), (3) an inference from consequents (*ex consequentibus*) or contraries

of the ancient world, the *παιδαγωγοί* were normally slaves who functioned as the guardians, guides, and disciplinarians of the children of the household at the direction of the father and head of the household until they reached their majority.¹⁰ The *παιδαγωγοί* were not, however, teachers since the role of the *παιδαγωγός* and the *διδάσκαλος* (teacher) were clearly differentiated (BDAG s.v. *παιδαγωγός*). Paul acknowledges the possibility that the Corinthians may have innumerable *παιδαγωγοί* but the contrary is the case (*ἀλλά*) with regard to fathers. There cannot be many; in fact there can only be one, and he claims that he is the one who fathered them in Christ Jesus through preaching the gospel to them (v. 15b).

The *παιδαγωγός* metaphor that Paul utilizes in v. 15a invokes at least three thoughts. First those who serve as leaders and guides in the community are, or at least should be, under Paul's paternal authority; second, in keeping with what Paul had said in 3:1–4, the Corinthians were immature and unready to take responsibility for themselves since *παιδαγωγοί* were only necessary until youths came of age; and finally, as their father in the faith, Paul has a special right to counsel and direct his converts into appropriate moral and social behaviour. This point is crucial to Paul's persuasive strategy in 1 Corinthians since it is the basis of his intervention in chapter 5, as we shall see. His right to admonish them differs from others, who might seek to admonish them, because his position is that of father of the community according to v. 15b. The repetition of the *γάρ* in 4:15b indicates that another rationale is to follow. The reason they cannot have many fathers in the Christ-household is that Paul fathered them (*ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς ἐγέννησα*) through the gospel. No one else can claim that status within the community, and therefore Paul stands as the *pater familias* of the Christ-household in Corinth, a position that is hierarchically dominant, as Burke (2003, 107–108) observes.

The argument in 4:14–21 is moved forward in 4:16 by the inferential use of *οὖν* that follows closely on the heels of the two instances of *γάρ* in the previous verse. Since Paul is the sole father of the Corinthian Christians (4:15b), he claims the right to exhort them in

(*ex pugnatibus*), (4) a rhetorical 'syllogism' (*oratorius syllogismus*), (5) and an incomplete 'syllogism' (*imperfectus syllogismus*)."

¹⁰ For a discussion of the role of the *παιδαγωγός* in the ancient world see Young (1987, 150–169).

4:16.¹¹ The content of his exhortation is that they should imitate him and reflects the normal understanding of the responsible father who provides a moral role model for his offspring to imitate. As indicated previously the material in 4:8–13 provides exemplification for the imitation that Paul wants from the community. As Castelli (1991, 103) has pointed out, however, such imitation is not neutral. It “reinforces the authoritative status of the model” being imitated, in this case, Paul.¹² Thus, imitation has to do with power and the control over those who are placed in the role of imitators from an ideological perspective.

When 4:14–16 is considered as a unified argumentative piece, a culturally relevant rhetorical syllogism emerges.¹³ It proceeds as follows:

Rule:	I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children (v. 14).
Counter Case:	For even if you may have innumerable <i>παιδαγωγοί</i> (to guide and discipline you) in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers (v. 15a);
Case:	for the reason that I fathered you in Christ Jesus through the gospel (v. 15b).
Result:	Therefore, I exhort you (as your father) to become imitators of me (v. 16).

¹¹ The *νουθετῶ*[v] of 4:14 and the *παρακαλῶ* of 4:16 are semantically related. The former refers to admonishing some to avoid or desist from an unacceptable form of behaviour (4:8–13), while the latter refers to an appeal to someone to engage in a desirable form of behaviour. The role of the father that Paul claims in relation to the Corinthians requires both types of exhortation which is why 4:15 provides a rationale for Paul’s responsibility for admonishing his readers (4:14), and leads to his inference in 4:16 regarding his responsibility to appeal to them to imitate him.

¹² Various scholars, e.g., Thiselton (2000, 371–373), have been troubled by Castelli’s interpretation of 4:16 and its wider context, 1:10–4:21. Thiselton, in his critique of Castelli, denies that Paul is self-interested in his assertion of power or seeking authority beyond what other apostles possessed (372) and maintains that Paul acknowledges that his own ministry is no less subject to divine critique and judgment than that of other people (373). He seems to know more about Paul’s motives than the text allows for. Paul clearly seeks to re-assert his power, as I have already shown, and even threatens the Corinthians with a show of his power, which he claims is the power of the “kingdom of God”. Such threats seemed to be aimed at his detractors whom he describes in 4:18 as being “puffed up” or “arrogant”, presumably towards Paul himself and perhaps others in the community. It is hard to think that overcoming such opposition is not in Paul’s own interest as much as it is in the interest of the community. See Wanamaker (2003) for a discussion of the ideological nature of Paul’s discourse in 1 Cor 1:10–4:21.

¹³ See Robbins (1998, 345–346) and Eriksson (2002, 246) on the rule, case, result terminology for the analysis of syllogistic enthymemes. The “rule” relates to the

The problem for Paul is how to encourage imitation when he is an absent father. His solution is to co-opt Timothy into his paternal responsibilities by sending him to the Corinthians. The διὰ τοῦτο at the beginning of 4:17 connects Timothy's mission to the Corinthians with Paul's desire to provide them with a model to imitate in their moral and social behaviour. Paul goes on to explain that Timothy will remind (ἀναμνήσει) the readers of Paul's ways in Christ. This of course implies that they have been taught those ways previously by Paul himself, and now they are going to have a refresher course in them. As the father of the household, Paul claims to take seriously his paternal responsibilities to educate his offspring in the Christian moral and social ways that he lives out and teaches to all of his churches.

The final four verses of chapter 4 show just how much Paul's power and authority are the issue in question in his discourse to the Corinthians in 1:10–4:13. In the context of 4:14–17 Paul's power and authority are placed under the rubric of his paternal-like status and role towards the community. The discourse draws on the common cultural wisdom regarding households and their hierarchical structure and internal order, as well as the father's position and role in maintaining that structure and order. Paul, the absent father, challenges the insubordination that he sees in at least some members of the household of faith who are arrogant towards his position and authority and perhaps towards their fellow believers (vv. 18–19). They have undermined the unity of the church community as a well-ordered household through bringing discord from the external political and social order into the church (Welborn 1987). As a result Paul threatens to come to his disordered household and test not the λόγος, that is the rhetorical eloquence (Winter 2002, 200–201), of those acting in an insubordinate manner, but their δύναμις. In 4:19 λόγος and δύναμις function as contraries. The γάρ at the beginning of v. 20 indicates the reason for testing the power of those who are puffed up with arrogance resides in the fact that the kingdom of God is characterized by power, not showy eloquence. The introduction in v. 20 of the kingdom of God (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) and its δύναμις, a concept drawn from prophetic discourse, into a dis-

major premise in a rhetorical syllogism, the “case” to the minor premise or evidence, and the “result” to the conclusion. Robbins uses this terminology because it facilitates discussion of different types of reasoning.

course where the language and metaphors are related to a wisdom based discourse on order through unity and concord in the household of God, is surprising. Paul suddenly sounds not like a father, but like a prophet in the mould of Elijah at Mount Carmel, who will challenge the arrogant and insubordinate members of the community to a contest to see who has God's power. Rhetorically vv. 19–20 appear to throw down the gauntlet in a way intended to intimidate Paul's detractors in Corinth.

First Corinthians 4:14–21, and therefore, 1 Cor 1:10–4:21, ends with a choice for the Corinthians based on the normal roles of a father. Paul asks his auditors to choose whether they want him to come to discipline them with a rod, an act based on the paternal responsibility to punish and correct bad behaviour, or whether they want him to come with paternal affection in a spirit of love and gentleness towards them. The use of the contraries, set in a pithy rhetorical question, suggests that this is a non-syllogistic enthymeme according to Quintilian's understanding of enthymemes.¹⁴ Thus in v. 21 Paul returns to the language of the household and the father's responsibilities for ensuring that his offspring behave properly. Clearly, if some of the Corinthians persist in their arrogant behaviour based on their sophistic superiority, behaviour that in Paul's view is responsible for the factionalism within the Christ-household of the Corinthian Christians, then he will have no choice but to come and punish such people. His preference, however, is to come as an affection father.

The rhetoric skill of Paul in 1 Cor 1:10–4:21 is indeed impressive (Given 2001, 93–103 Martin 1995, 55–68). In an argument that critiques rhetorical eloquence, Paul himself employs it in a highly competent manner.¹⁵ The reason for this is not hard to see. Classical rhetoric was focused on persuasion in deliberative situations. Whether his rhetoric was subtle, sophisticated and impressive, or not, rhetoric was the only game in town to accomplish what Paul sought to accomplish in 1 Cor 1:10–4:21, namely, to turn the Corinthians away from their factionalism and its basis in sophistic competition, to unity through concord and self-abasement, at least among those of high social status, in the community. Crucial for this was Paul's assertion of his own authority and power that gave him the right to be taken seriously in trying to resolve the problems of the community. From

¹⁴ For a discussion of this type of enthymeme as an element of style see Holloway (2001).

¹⁵ On the critique of rhetoric through rhetoric see Martin (1995, 48).

5:1 onwards Paul begins the process of addressing specific problems and issues that have arisen in the community. Given that his own authority had been challenged he could only hope to be heard and obeyed if he could demonstrate to his auditors that he had a right to address them and that in spite of his external low status, he was a person of formidable power on the basis of his spiritual wisdom and insight that was more important and impressive than the human wisdom and rhetorical sophistication of those who were so much admired by the community. Without the rhetorically sophisticated argument of 1:10–4:21, Paul's instruction and advice in the chapters which follow could not possibly have carried conviction. In the end, Paul argues that his role as the founder/progenitor of the community gives him a father-like authority over the household of faith. This status superiority of himself as the father of the community allied with his demonstration of rhetorical eloquence, while denying the whole time that he had such eloquence, laid the foundation for Paul to begin issuing instructions and advice in chapter 5 and beyond.

3. *Discipline in the household of faith*

First Corinthians 1–4, as well as much of 2 Corinthians, makes clear that Paul had a very complex and difficult relation with the church in Corinth. As we have seen, the evidence of 1 Cor 1:10–4:21 points to Paul trying to re-assert his authority in the community. Without this attempt to reclaim his authority over the community, his attempts at unification of the community would seemingly have no possibility of success. Similarly, in chapter 5 when Paul turns to the first of a series of specific problems in the community about which he wishes to instruct them, it seems inconceivable that he could have hoped for an obedient response without them having accepted his authority and right to give them instructions regarding the ordering of social behaviour among the members of the community.

The words ὅλως ἀκούεται signal a new section in the rhetoric of the letter. In 1:11 Paul identifies a report from Chloe's people as the source of his knowledge regarding the divisive disputes taking place within the church at Corinth. The words at the beginning of 5:1 concerning a report of gross immorality may have the same origins, but what is important is that they signal the fact that Paul is engaged in a dialogical interaction with his Corinthian converts. Even

a casual reading of the next few chapters reveals that Paul is dealing with a series of issues that are practical manifestations of the factionalism and divisiveness within the community at Corinth, and thus the rhetorical move in the letter is from a general appeal for unity and concord in 1:10–4:21 to an attempt to resolve specific instances that have caused discord within the church.

The whole of chapter 5 is devoted to a single problem since the words “in order that the one doing this deed might be expelled (ἄρθῃ) from your midst” in v. 2 form an inclusion with the words “drive out (ἐξόρατε) the wicked individual from among yourselves” in v. 13. The situation envisaged by Paul in 5:1–13 has several dimensions. First, some man in the community is living in an immoral relation by having his father’s wife, or possibly his father’s concubine, as his own wife or concubine. If the woman was indeed the former wife of the man’s father then this was not only ethically repugnant to Jews, but it also constituted an illegal union in terms of Roman law and general social customs as Andrew Clarke (1993, 77–80) has shown. De Vos (1993, 106–108), however, comes to the conclusion that the woman was a concubine of the man’s father, and not his actual stepmother as Clarke holds. Paul does not give sufficient details for us to decide this matter with any certainty, but as De Vos (1998, 114) observes, for Paul, as a Jew, the distinction between concubine and wife was not one that would concern him. Whatever the man and woman’s exact social statuses had been and were, Paul places their current relation under the rubric of πορνεία, a term that originally referred to intercourse with a prostitute but came to refer to all forms of illicit sex. Here it clearly denotes a case of incest rather than mere adultery in terms of Paul’s Jewish sensibilities based on Lev 18:6–18; Deut 22:30; 27:20. Paul upbraids the Corinthians claiming that such an immoral relationship was unheard of even among unbelievers. But equally troubling for Paul was another matter: the absence of an appropriate response by the community to the gross immorality taking place in their midst.

Paul says in 5:2 that they are πεφυσιωμένοι, puffed up or arrogant, when they should be mourning for tolerating such immorality. The choice of the term πεφυσιωμένοι is revealing as it occurs on three occasions in chapter 4. In 4:6 Paul says that the Corinthians need to learn not to go beyond what is written “in order that none of you be puffed up (φυσιοῦσθε) on behalf of another against someone else”. This clearly suggests that Paul understood the factionalism

within the church as related to some people identifying with those whom they considered to be socially superior to others and from whom they considered themselves to gain a benefit such as status or patronage on the basis of their identification. The same verb also occurs in 4:18 where Paul says that some have become puffed up (ἐφυσιώθησάν τινες) thinking that he will not be coming back to Corinth. In 4:19 Paul claims that he will test the power of those who have become arrogant (πεφυσιωμένων), not their rhetorical eloquence. These two verses taken together suggest that those who were puffed up with arrogance were condescending and abrasive towards Paul. The juxtaposition of 5:2 to 4:18–19 with the repetition of the perfect participle, πεφυσιωμένοι, is a strong indicator that the same group of people were the target of the apostle's criticism in 4:18–19 and 5:2 (Chow 1992, 139). The arrogance in 5:2 may well reflect the same issue as I have suggested in relation to 4:6. Through identification with the offending man who was a person of relatively high social status (Clarke 1993, 85–88; De Vos 1998, 108), some in the community may well have gained a sense of social status for themselves that left them viewing Paul as a social inferior. Chow (1992, 140) thinks that the arrogance that Paul refers to may reflect the fact that the offending man was a patron within the church and his clients were rendering culturally required support for him. Certainly Paul reviles his readers for not themselves removing the immoral man from their community (5:2b). The unqualified sternness of Paul's rebuke in 5:2 only makes sense if 1:10–4:21 has served ideologically to re-establish his authority with the community so that his rebuke is the rebuke of an absent father disciplining the children of his household (cf. Joubert 1995, 219). Thus in its rhetorical context Paul uses wisdom based discourse in initially addressing the ethical crisis within the community.

His rhetorical strategy in dealing with the immorality he has identified is important to understand from a socio-rhetorical point of view. The rhetorical problem for Paul is that either a faction within the church community did not see the relation between the man referred to in 5:1 and his father's wife/concubine as a moral issue at all, though this seems highly unlikely given that in general society it was a moral and possibly legal issue as we have seen, or they believed that in the circumstances, they were not in a position to act against the man. Malina and Neyrey (1996, 168) suggest that

the failure to hold the man accountable for his actions may have been caused by the “prestige and social rewards” that the sinful man brought to his in-group. Paul’s approach is to first establish the nature of the problem through an enthymemic argument in 5:1 and then through the connection of 5:1–2 to shame the Corinthians for what he sees as ethical turpitude. The reasoning in 5:1, using the “rule, case, result” terminology in the analysis of the enthymeme is as follows:

- Result: There is sexual immorality (πορνεία) among you (v. 1a).
- Rule: The pagans (τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) do not practice/tolerate such sexual immorality (v. 1b);
- Case: for (ὥστε) a man is living in a connubial relation with his father’s wife/concubine (v. 1c).

The logic of this enthymeme is to persuade the Corinthians, or at least a particular faction among them, that they have an intolerable case of sexual immorality taking place among them, whatever they may think of it. There is also an implicit argument taking place here that assumes that Christians must have a higher standard of morality than pagans as part of their new and separate identity. The implicit argument would go something like this:

- Rule: Christians, unlike unbelievers, do not practice sexual immorality (see 6:9–11).
- Case: You have a Christian practicing a particularly evil form of sexual immorality (not even the unbelievers do/tolerate it) (v. 1b).
- Result: Your tolerance of this immorality brings shame on you.

Paul seeks further to shame the Corinthians, or at least those tolerating the gross immorality (obviously some found the behaviour of the man objectionable since otherwise they would not have reported it to Paul in the first place), by a second enthymemic argument in 5:2. This argument is one from contraries, a regular type of argument in wisdom discourse according to Robbins (2002, 31–32), and one which as I have previously suggested, constitutes a non-syllogistic enthymemic argument in terms of classical rhetorical definitions of an enthymeme. Paul Holloway says that the enthymeme derived from contraries ideally “was no longer than a single sentence” and “was almost always expressed in the form of a question”. He further notes that they were regularly used “to attack or ridicule an opponent by exposing logical or personal inconsistency” (Holloway

2001, 335).¹⁶ Certainly 5:2 conforms extremely closely to Holloway's description of the enthymeme as drawn from contraries. It is set out as a question, consists of a concise compound sentence, and indicts the Corinthians for their inappropriate response to a serious breach of the Christian moral code in their midst. The contrary is signalled by the expression, οὐχὶ μᾶλλον, where the strengthened form of the negative, οὐ, underscores the contradistinction between the current behaviour of the Corinthians, who Paul says are puffed up or arrogant regarding the man, and how they should be grieving for what was happening regarding the man living in an incestuous relationship in their midst. The concluding ἵνα clause then indicates the goal of the grief or mourning, namely, the exclusion of the offending man (ὁ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο πράξας) from the community/household. Thus, Paul seeks to shame the readers into the action he proposes in 5:3–5 by his argument from contraries in 5:2. Whether the shaming actually works beyond the rhetorical level is heavily dependent upon whether the intended audience accepts Paul's authority to criticize their actions, and this in turn depends on whether they accept his claim to a father-like role in the community that would empower such criticism. Second Corinthians 12:20–21 suggests very possibly that 1 Cor. 5:1–13 failed to accomplish what Paul had hoped that it would.

The next move in the discourse is to create appropriate action on the part of the Corinthians without Paul actually being physically present with them. Mitchell (1992, 229) says that Paul “executes an epistolary legal decision”. But this misses the prophetic nature of the discourse adopted by Paul in 5:3–5 as he moves from a wisdom discourse based in the household of faith where he, the father of the community, has the responsibility of acting authoritatively for the well-being of the household/family to a prophetic discourse associated with judgment. Robbins (2002, 44) points out that prophetic discourse “is a close ally of both wisdom and miracle discourse, since it presupposes that God's word has the power to create and destroy” but that it goes beyond them “by focusing on special people or groups God has chosen to take leadership in the production of righteousness within the human realm on earth”. From Paul's perspective, God expects righteousness or moral rectitude from the household

¹⁶ See Aune (2003, 157) for a critique of certain of Holloway's conclusions.

of faith. The immorality or unrighteousness of the man living in an incestuous relation requires the man's expulsion from the community for the sake of the community's righteousness or purity, a point that becomes clear in 5:6–8. Thus, Paul assumes the role of a prophet in order to pronounce divine judgment upon the man, not simply on his own authority, as the absent father, but on the authority of the Lord Jesus in whose name Paul says that he has already pronounced judgment on the man according to vv. 3–4.

Rhetorically the γάρ clause of 5:3 provides the rationale for the action Paul directs his auditors to take in v. 5. They are to hand the evil-doer over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh (v. 5) for the reason that Paul has already judged him and found him guilty. The act of handing him over has the intention of leading to the final salvation of the man in the judgment (v. 5) after the destruction of his flesh.¹⁷ The existence of the rationale for the action of the community points to another enthymemic piece of reasoning that can be analyzed as follows:

Case: For I have already judged the person living in incest (and found him guilty of doing evil) (v. 3).

Rule: Hand over the evil-doer to Satan for the destruction of his flesh (v. 5a).

Result: That the spirit of the person may be saved in the day of our Lord (v. 5b).

Paul couches the exclusion process of the immoral man in terms of his own spirit presence (παρὼν δὲ τῷ πνεύματι) joining with the Corinthians when they meet to enact his prophetic judgment (vv. 3–4) in the “power of our Lord Jesus”. This language of presence in the spirit while absent in the body and the presence of the power of the Lord Jesus provides a strong motivation for the action of the

¹⁷ The expulsion of the man from the community and the meaning of the final purpose clause regarding the saving of the spirit on the day of the Lord have been the focus of a great deal of scholarly debate. South (1993) has convincingly argued against what might be described as the dominant curse/death interpretation of 5:3–5 in my view. Martin (1995, 168–171) offers an interesting medical interpretation of the logic behind Paul's claim that by destroying the flesh, the man's spirit might be saved at the judgment. The attempt by Shillington (1998) to argue that 5:5 is a re-textualization of the atonement ritual of Lev 16 is not convincing since the man does not symbolically bear the sins of the community away, but is himself an object of contamination within the community that must be removed for the well-being of the community. For a further critique of Shillington see Garland (2003, 183).

community. Paul does not require them to act alone but assures them of his own presence and the presence of the power of their Lord in order to fortify them in removing a person of social prominence from the community, something they had not been prepared to do on their own previously.

Having called on the Corinthians to join with him in the exclusion of the sinful man from their midst, Paul returns to the problem posed by the members of the community themselves. This is signalled by the sentence, "Your boasting is not good", in 5:6 that picks up the sense of the words "and you are arrogant" from 5:2 (Conzelmann 1975, 98). Rhetorically, from Paul's perspective, the issue was that the Corinthian Christians had failed to respond appropriately to the sinful man's behaviour by removing him from their community without Paul's intervention, so having instructed them on his removal, Paul turns to providing his auditors with a reason why they should remove the evil-doer from their community in terms of their own purity. As in 5:2 where Paul accuses them of arrogance, he does not explain what he means by the Corinthians' boasting, but here, as there, it would seem to relate to the status or other benefits to the community, or a section within the community, that were derived from the sinful man's membership in the community. Paul employs a maxim in v. 6b that takes the form of a rhetorical question: "Do you not know that a little leavening leavens the whole lump of dough?"¹⁸ In terms of the rhetorical theory and practices of his day the maxim itself would have constituted a non-syllogistic enthymeme. But this construction, along with the two other sentences that bracket it, form part of a syllogistic type enthymeme in terms of contemporary rhetorical understanding of the rhetorical force of Paul's argument.

- Case: Your boasting (regarding the evil-doer) is not good (for it shows you are being corrupted) (v. 6a).
- Rule: A little leavening leavens the whole batch of dough (v. 6b).
- Result: Clean out the old leavening (the evil-doer) so that you may be a new batch of dough as you are (meant to be) unleavened (uncorrupted) dough (v. 7a).

The metaphor on which this reasoning is based points to this being a piece of wisdom type discourse since it applies an example from

¹⁸ Conzelmann (1975, 98) calls this a proverb. Paul elsewhere uses this maxim in Gal 5:9. For non-Jewish parallels to this maxim see Betz (1979, 266).

God's created order to the need for the community to purify itself of the corrupting influence of the evil-doer in its midst. The words of v. 7b, however, show that vv. 6–7a are not simply wisdom based as they appear on the surface. The second part of v. 7 introduces the theme of the Passover with Paul identifying Christ as the Christian Passover sacrifice. According to Exodus 12,¹⁹ the Passover sacrifice and meal immediately preceded the seven day Festival of Unleavened Bread that commemorated the flight from Egypt when there was no time to bake bread that had been raised by the action of a leavening agent. According to the regulations for the Festival of Unleavened Bread each household was to be purged of leavening for bread baking and any violations of the regulation were to be punished by exclusion from the people of Israel (Exod 12:15, 19). Thus by introducing the reference to the Passover in 5:7b Paul recontextualizes the enthymeme of vv. 6–7a that might have appeared to be a straightforward maxim with interpretative sentences and no particular religious background into a reference about Christians maintaining the requirements of the Jewish Festival of Unleavened Bread in a metaphorical sense. This clearly moves 5:6–7a into the realm of what Robbins (2004, 4) refers to in socio-rhetorical analysis as priestly rhetorlect since priestly discourse is associated with, among other things, communal purity. The priestly character of the discourse becomes even more poignant in 5:7b since Paul says, τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός. At the heart of priestly rhetorlect in early Christian discourse is the idea of “beneficial exchange between God and humans” in which “sacrificial actions by humans create an environment in which God acts redemptively among humans in the world” (Robbins 2004, 5). Here the death of Christ is metaphorically equated with the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, thereby providing a rationale for purging the community of polluting influences since the Passover sacrifice effectively inaugurated the Festival of Unleavened Bread with its purgation of

¹⁹ The Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread are mentioned together on three further occasions in the Torah: Lev 23:5, 8; Num 28:16–25; and Deut 16:1–8. Outside the Torah, the most interesting references are found in 2 Chr 30:1–27; 35:1–19; and Ezra 6:19–22. Each passage contains a reference to purification in relation to the celebration of the Passover and Festival of Unleavened Bread. For a useful historical discussion of origins and character of the festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread see Bokser (1992).

all agents of fermenting impurity from the household.²⁰ The argument runs as follows:

- Rule: Clean out the old leaven (in preparation for the festival) (v. 7a).
- Result: that you may be fresh dough, just as you are unleavened (that is pure) (v. 7b).
- Case: for Christ our Passover has been sacrificed (inaugurating the Festival of Unleavened Bread) (v. 7c);

It is Paul, however, rather than the Hebrew Bible, who reconfigures the twin festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread into a complex metaphorical blend that has as its goal the justification of purging moral corruption from the community in order to create a morally pure community.²¹

In 5:8 Paul draws a logical conclusion to his claim in v. 7c that Christ, the Christian Passover sacrifice has been sacrificed, as the *ὥστε* followed by an independent clause indicates. A significant change, however, occurs in the conceptual framework from v. 7. In v. 7 the Corinthian community itself is metaphorically designated as a new lump of unleavened dough in order to suggest that they should be pure and uncorrupted once they have rid themselves of the corrupting influence of the egregiously sinful member of the community who threatened to taint the whole community.²² As we have

²⁰ BDAG s.v. *πάσχα* points out that in popular usage the festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread were merged since the former began on the 14th of Nisan in the Jewish calendar and extended into the early hours of the 15th, while the latter began on the 15th of Nisan.

²¹ Tuckett (2000, 415) argues that in 1 Cor 5:7b–8 that “Paul is taking up a tradition which compared Jesus’ death with the Passover sacrifice and which had already developed this symbolism via the leavened/unleavened motif in an ethical direction”. The ethical interpretation of 5:8 is preferable to the interpretation of May (2004, 71–74) who claims that 5:8 is not inculcating ethical behaviour, but is about the exclusion of the immoral man from the community. Against this view are three things. First May does not seem to give sufficient attention to the change from people as leavened or unleavened in v. 7a to Christians as the celebrators of the Festival of Unleavened Bread in v. 8 who must celebrate with the moral purity implied in the very general moral precepts of *εὐλκρινεία καὶ ἀληθεία* and not with the old leavening of the general vices of *κακία καὶ πονηρία*. Secondly, if May were correct, then v. 8 would simply be repeating the exclusion instruction of v. 7a, and finally, it seems unlikely that *κακία* and *πονηρία* referred to sinners as May (2004, 72) maintains, since we should have expected the masculine adjectival forms *κακός* and *πονηρός* if Paul wished to refer to people or even types of people.

²² May (2004, 69) argues that Paul already considered the sinful man an outsider to the community because the church, by virtue of the “apocalyptic event of

seen, it is only in v. 7c that a clear connection is made with Jewish cultic practice indicating that the purification of v. 7a may be connected with the Festival of Unleavened Bread. In v. 8 a new metaphor is introduced as the Corinthians become co-participants with Paul in the new life in Christ portrayed as the celebration of the twin festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread.

Rhetorically v. 8 is a non-syllogistic enthymeme of contraries in which Paul uses the figure of celebrating the twin festivals as a metaphor for living the Christian life in a state of purity with the pre-festival corruption and pollution removed. He contrasts the characteristics of the pre-Christian life with those that should characterize the Corinthians' new existence in Christ. The Corinthians are to celebrate not with the old leaven, the leaven of depravity and wickedness (ἐν ζύμῃ κακίας καὶ πονηρίας) that characterized their former lives and if continued would necessitate their exclusion from the community, as it did for the man living in an incestuous relationship. Instead (ἀλλὰ) they are to celebrate their new life in Christ with the unleavened bread of pure motives and uprightness (ἐν ἀζύμοις εἰλικρινείας καὶ ἀληθείας). Thus, from a socio-rhetorical perspective, Paul's argument, based in priestly rhetorolect with its roots in sacrifice and other cultic matters, is blended with a moral imperative typical of wisdom rhetorolect through their connection to a double metaphor. Christ's death on the cross is equated with the Jewish Passover sacrifice that commences the twin festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread and as a result of this, Paul and his converts are to live lives of purity typified by the period of purity associated with the twin festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread.

In modern terms, in 5:1–8 Paul is concerned not only with the purity of the community for its own sake, but also with setting boundaries between his Corinthian converts and the pagan society from which presumably a significant number of them had come. This is one of the primary goals of most purity regulations,²³ but in Paul parenesis also serves this function as 6:15–20 shows (De Vos 1999, 227).

the death of Christ" was a community of the new age, whereas the man's behaviour indicated that he belonged to the old order. Thus the sinful man was out of place and had to be removed from the community of the new age.

²³ See DeSilva (2000, 270–315) for an excellent discussion of purity in the NT and its role in identity creation and maintenance, and boundary separation between Christians and pagans. See also May (2004, 77–78) with specific reference to identity and boundary separation in 1 Cor 5:1–13.

The man living in incest had brought corruption from the wider society into the body of Christ, and for this reason he had to be excluded to protect the distinctly Christian identity that Paul sought to cultivate in his converts at Corinth. But the issues of separation from the world and Christian identity were not new issues in 1 Corinthians since 5:9 shows us that Paul had written to the Corinthians previously not to associate with sexually immoral people (μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι πόρνοις). He implies that the Corinthians had misunderstood him as meaning not to associate with sexually immoral people or greedy individuals, robbers, or idolaters in general (v. 10), rather than understanding his injunction as referring specifically to members within the community itself, as he explains in v. 11.²⁴

First Corinthians 5:9–13 contains a complex argument that has as its goal reinforcing the absolute necessity of excluding the sinful man from the church community, as the final words of v. 13 demonstrate. Paul first asserts in vv. 9–10 that when he wrote to the Corinthian church not to mix with sexually immoral people (μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι πόρνοις) in a previous letter, he could not have meant the sexually immoral of this world (τοῖς πόρνοις τοῦ κόσμου τούτου) or other types of transgressors for the reason that to avoid interacting with such people would require leaving the present world. As Adams (2000, 125–126) points out, this argument does not soften “the social and ideological boundaries” between the church and the world, rather it confirms those boundaries since the κόσμος is characterized as the place “populated by immoral and corrupt people, so numerous that believers cannot avoid contact with them”.

In v. 11 Paul maintains that what he is writing now to the Corinthians reiterates what he had written previously. While this highlights the dialogical nature of Paul’s communication with the Corinthians, his goal is to make perfectly clear what he meant when he had previously written that the Corinthians should not have social intercourse with anyone guilty of sexual immorality or other transgressive behaviour. Paul reiterates that it is not outsiders who are to be avoided, something which he has already acknowledged would be impossible, but anyone who is called a brother (τις ἀδελφός

²⁴ May (2004, 78) claims that the potential for the Corinthians to misunderstand or intentionally misrepresent the expression μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι πόρνοις was an obvious possibility.

ὄνομαζόμενος) and therefore is a member within the community of faith. He elaborates on the list of malefactors contained in v. 10, adding abusive people and drunkards to the previous list of people from whom the community are to dissociate themselves. Paul's injunction to avoid social interaction extends particularly to table fellowship within the community since this may well have provided the basis for defining membership in the community (Smith 2003, 203).

The enthymemic structure of these verses is that of an incomplete syllogism in which the reader must fill in the missing conclusion. Thus the argument runs as follows:

- Rule: "Do not have social relations with sexually immoral people" does not mean with sexually immoral persons of this world, or greedy people, and robbers and idolaters (vv. 9–10a);
- Case: for the reason that you would be obliged then to depart the world (v. 10b);
- Result: do not have social relations with someone who is called a brother if he is a sexually immoral person or a greedy person, or an idolater, or an abusive person, or a drunkard, or a robber; do not even eat with such a person (v. 11).

In 5:12 Paul asks two rhetorical questions in support of his instruction that Christians avoid social intercourse with those who are reputedly brothers in the faith but are in fact malefactors. Invoking the theme of judgment which is a *topos* of Christian prophetic discourse since this type of discourse is concerned with effecting righteousness in human experience as I have previously indicated,²⁵ Paul indicates that neither he, nor by extension the Corinthian Christians, have a right to impose righteousness on the outside world through judging transgressors (v. 12a). This must await God's future final judgment against those who are outside the community of faith (v. 13a). Christians are responsible, however, for exercising judgment within the community of faith to ensure righteous behaviour demarcates the boundary between the community and those who are outsiders (v. 12b).

While the final sentence of v. 13 is almost certainly derived from Deut 17:7 LXX, Paul does not call attention to this fact to claim the authority of the Jewish sacred text in his enunciation. Instead, he simply proclaims a general principle for maintaining the distinctive

²⁵ See Robbins (2002, 44–50) for an extensive discussion of prophetic rhetorolect.

identity of the community through the exclusion of evil-doers. At the same time, however, the exclusionary instruction serves as a fitting conclusion to the whole of the chapter by re-emphasizing the need to exclude the evil-doer, who is guilty of committing the heinous sexual sin of incest, in order to maintain the purity and righteousness of the community.

4. *Conclusion*

In this paper, I have sought to show the complexity in Paul's argumentation in 1 Corinthians 1–5 around the issue of his authority and its application to a morally problematic situation in the Corinthians' community. Given the rhetorical situation constructed by Paul, an argument for his authority inevitably needed to precede his attempt to assert his authority. While 1 Cor 1:10–4:13 contains a line of argumentation that emphasizes Paul's pre-eminence within the community, 4:14–21 brings that line of reasoning to a head by using an extended metaphor regarding Paul as the father of the household of faith in Corinth. Thompson (1990, 63) argues that metaphors are an important ideological resource since they obscure relations of power by endowing people with characteristics that they do not really possess. The extended father metaphor does precisely this by openly establishing a rationale for Paul's position of hierarchical dominance over the community through his claim to have fathered the community in Christ through the gospel (4:15). This father-like relationship then becomes the basis for his intervention into the workings of his children in Corinth in chapter 5 where Paul seeks to persuade the Corinthian community to do what they had hitherto been reluctant to do, namely, exclude a member, probably of high social status, from the community for gross sexual immorality. Paul does not claim that it is his apostolic status that empowers him to instruct the Corinthians regarding appropriate moral conduct, since others could presumably claim that status. What no one else could claim and therefore the basis of authority and power that Paul maintains is uniquely his, comes from his role as the founder/progenitor of the community, a role that he asserts gives him power and responsibility analogous to a father in relation to the Corinthians. Whether Paul's rhetoric succeeded in convincing everyone in the community, however, is another matter.

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WILHELM BOUSSET'S COMMENTARY ON REVELATION AND HERMENEUTICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE REVELATION OF JOHN

Pieter G. R. de Villiers

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the groundbreaking commentary of Bousset on the Revelation of John from a hermeneutical perspective. It does so by surveying its nature, contents and ideological leanings. It points out the positions against which he reacted and the perspectives that he developed, focussing especially on his historical and eschatological reading of the Revelation of John. It thus aims to point out the ongoing relevance of this work for present day research in terms of hermeneutical perspectives that were opened up by it.

1. *Introduction*

The Book of Revelation is often stereotyped as one of the most inaccessible texts in the NT. The fact is, however, that already from early times and especially since the Enlightenment, the book generated excellent commentaries on the field of Biblical Studies that provided illuminating information about the literary and the historical nature of the text.

Scholarship on Revelation developed slowly over a number of centuries, consolidating itself at the beginning of the 20th century with the appearance of several major commentaries. Within a matter of two decades, some major publications appeared in which pioneering and advanced scholarship on Revelation was made accessible to a wide readership. These commentaries set the tone for what was to be written and researched about Revelation in subsequent decades. The first among these early 20th century commentaries to appear was that of Bousset (1906). In the same year, Swete also wrote a

¹ The 1911 revision is quoted in this essay.

major commentary.¹ These were followed after the first world war by, amongst others, such well known publications as that of Beckwith in the United States (1919), Charles (1920) and Kiddle in the United Kingdom (1940), Zahn (1924–1926), Sickenberger (1926; cf. 1939 and 1946) and Lohmeyer (1953; cf. 1934–1935 and 1982) in Germany and Allo (1933) in a French context.²

One of the most influential commentaries in scholarship generally³ and on Revelation specifically, was produced by the German NT scholar, Bousset ([1887]; cf. 1906).⁴ It grew through several editions over a period of ten years until the final text at the beginning of the 20th century in 1906.

Studied far beyond its original German context and often quoted, it is a commentary that stands firmly in the tradition of the historical approach to Biblical texts, as will be explained below. However, it is a commentary that revealed this scholarship as standing at the crossroads. It excelled in noting and analysing previous scholarship,⁵ pointing out its weaknesses and acknowledging its enduring contributions to the interpretation of Revelation. Most important is the way in which it contributed new perspectives. Some of these are well known. Bousset is generally acknowledged as initiator of the “History of Religion” approach to the NT, and his commentary is often read against this background. In promoting this approach, he redefined the historical reading decisively (cf. further below). Kümmel (1972, 230) described him as the most influential representative of the “History of Religion” approach to the NT—a reputation that is consistently and extensively associated with his name.⁶ In early responses to this commentary, this was also pointed out as a new development (Holtzmann 1897, 387).

A closer reading of his commentary, however, reveals that the commentary of Bousset addressed some other seminal issues. He

² These commentaries differ in quality, approach and nature quite extensively, but were published in influential series. I plan to discuss them in more detail elsewhere.

³ Amongst others because of the way it contributed to the “History of Religion” method.

⁴ The references in this essay are to the 1906 edition.

⁵ Holtzmann (1897, 385) notes how Bousset successfully worked through the maize of problems created by source critics.

⁶ For a highly informative discussion of Bousset, cf. Neill and Wright (1988, 175–177), referring to his width of outlook, accuracy of knowledge and sobriety of judgment. This information provides valuable insights in his commentary. Cf. also Riches (1993).

stressed a proper historical interpretation and also defended a futurist eschatological reading of Revelation—issues that were striking in scholarship of that era which either understood it as a book about events in the past, or which focussed on carving up the text in different sources in order to locate them in different periods of first century history.

Bousset's work deviated in several ways from established interpretations of Revelation. This needs attention first since it provides a framework within which to understand him.

2. *Rejecting calculations*

It has already been mentioned briefly that Bousset read Revelation first and foremost as an eschatological book, referring to still outstanding events. Before this is discussed in more detail, it must be pointed out what this future expectation does *not* mean for him, since it is crucial for his understanding of the book. This will prepare the way for understanding his eschatological reading of the text.

Bousset (1906, 89–90) rejected attempts to read Revelation as a prediction of the *End of the world*. Amongst the expositors that Bousset criticized in this respect, were such famous mathematicians from Cambridge, like Sir Isaac Newton and William Whiston.⁷ He, however, also polemicised against movements in scholarly and ecclesiastical contexts in Germany, like, for example, the influential Pietist author, Bengel, who, through a complicated set of calculations, determined 1836 as the date that the *End of the world* would take place.⁸

The criticism of Bousset focussed on the outcomes of this approach. That these predictions were simply arbitrary in nature was evident from the fact that they consistently failed to materialize as foretold.

⁷ Bousset (1906, 89–90; more sharply on 119–120); cf. also Swete (1911, ccxiv). These two authors produced their reading under the influence of the arbitrary reading of their British compatriot, Mede, who expected the *End of the world* in his own times and who related parts of Revelation to the Turks and to Roman Catholic popes. Bousset, in his nuanced manner, notes, however, that Newton, other than Mede, at least correctly also dated Revelation in the time of Nero and did not calculate a precise date for the *End of the world*.

⁸ How widespread this calculative reading was, is evident from similar readings found in revivalist movements on the east coast of the United States during these times. Cf. De Villiers (1987).

He also, impatiently, drew attention to the repeated attempts of those who uttered these calculations to modify their pronouncements with new dates.

Of more interest are the hermeneutical aspects of his position on this matter. Bousset's criticism of calculative readings targeted a typically fundamentalist approach to Scripture with its ahistorical nature. A superficial reading of his commentary may create the impression that he is vulnerable to criticism, since he often argued that Revelation communicates a message about the future. However, he stressed that all parts and contents of Revelation, its eschatology included, must be understood in terms of the historical situation towards the end of the first century. Parts of the text cannot be isolated from the composition as a whole and applied outside its historical context to later situations. In this way, and as is clear from his criticism of calculative readings, he qualified his eschatological perspective by his historical approach—even if he stressed that the eschatology of Revelation does contain a futurist moment.

In rejecting these calculative readings, he confirmed certain fundamental hermeneutical insights that were developing among scholars in their criticism of calculative readings of Revelation. Clearly aware of the widespread obsession with this calculative use of Revelation, Swete, for example, in his commentary from the same time made remarks similar to those of Bousset.⁹

That calculative readings are still alive and hugely popular in some contemporary church circles, is well known. It is an issue that was not investigated in detail in the course of 20th century commentaries on Revelation—certainly not in the extensive manner as it was done by Bousset. However, with the explosion of publications on the rapture, especially in a North American context, some recent commentaries began to note these trends (e.g. Barr 1998; Osborne 2002; Koester 2001). Rossing (2004; in Rhoads 2005) is one of the few established scholars in the field who wrote a monograph on the theme of the rapture and contrasted it with a responsible exegesis, but Bousset's commentary with its extensive discussion of such readings of his own time waits to be equalled in modern commentaries. His commentary is an example of how scholarship engages not only

⁹ Cf. Swete (1911, ccxv, referring to the French Revolution).

with the technical issues in the field, but takes on skew readings of the text head on. Today these comments can only be fully appreciated when it is kept in mind how influential scholars like Newton and theologians like Bengel were. To oppose them and to swim against the current of popular Biblical readings must have demanded some courage.

3. *Resisting dogmatic exegesis*

Bousset not only had popular and calculative readings of Revelation in mind with his criticism. He (1906, 88–89) explicitly noted that the predictive use of Revelation reflects a modern dogmatic use of the text by theologians as well. Investigating his arguments about this, will help clarify his understanding of a historical analysis of Revelation.

He pointed out how the text became a weapon in the struggle of Protestant authors against their opponents through their identification of papal figures as the Antichrist in the book. The interpretation of the book, he argued, came to reflect apologetic concerns and church politics, imposing on the text modern dogmatic concerns. The fact that later theologians were less emotional and more “objective” than their Protestant predecessors in such interpretations could not hide their ideological leanings. “Was übrig blieb, war nicht mehr als eine abstrakte dogmatische Behauptung, eine besonders beliebtes Waffenstück protestantischer Polemik” (Bousset 1906, 88).

Protestants were not the only sinners. Dogmatic exegesis was also to be found in exegesis of Roman Catholic scholars who identified the Antichrist as a future, eschatological figure in order to refute Protestant exegesis that identified popes for that position. Bousset (1906, 91) notes with appreciation the scientific character of the work by the Roman Catholic scholar Ribeira, who published a commentary on Revelation in 1578 in which he broke with the calculative use of the book, but observes in an aside remark how his future reading of the Antichrist was driven by anti-Protestant concerns. He was rather concerned about non-historical and ideological approaches to the text.

The trend in this position of Bousset’s commentary is clear: for him, interpretation in the *scientific* sense of the word provides the true understanding of Revelation. He considered the historical approach

to Revelation as the correct scientific way of interpreting it. A scientific, historical approach means avoiding dogmatic misuse of it in order to defend modern church beliefs and positions.¹⁰ An ahistorical fundamentalism and literalism has no place in understanding the book.

He showed how earlier scholarship prepared the way for scientific work. Sensitivity for the historical approach is found, for example, already in the major publication of Alcasar (1614; 1619), whom he regards (1906, 93–94) as the founder of the scientific study of Revelation. He notes, “(er) bricht so einer einheitlichen historischen Auffassung des Buches Bahn”. Later on, and closer to his own time, he observes (1906, 104) that Herrenschnneider and Eichhorn “stellte endlich die Auslegung der Apk auf den Boden, den sie mit Alcasar fast schon erreicht hatte”. This scientific interpretation, however, he points out further, developed especially since the 19th century as scholars since Semler began understanding that the book represented a historical scenario in the first century in which the church especially rejected and criticized Rome as its major opponent.¹¹ This process then really initiated “Die Anbahnung der richtigen Auffassung der Apk” (Bousset 1906, 104).

The remedy against deviant interpretations thus was to be found in scientific analysis with a historical character and without ecclesiastical prejudices. In promoting this position, he reflects a general trend in NT Studies in which the historical approach to the Biblical text was a firm legacy of the Enlightenment and the decades of study of the discipline since that time reflected the intense struggle against orthodox, fundamentalistic readings of Biblical texts.¹²

Scientific work, required by Bousset as answer to dogmatic manipulation of texts, did not always provide good answers—as is clear from the way in which Bousset distanced himself also against more technical scholarship. This requires some more discussion now.

¹⁰ Note, as but one example, his criticism (1906, 97) of Coccejus’ interpretation of the 1 000-year reign.

¹¹ Van der Waal (1971, 265–279) similarly pointed out how early generations of scholars until the later, rationalist interpreters, read the text to a large extent as a discussion of the fall of Jerusalem and the victory of the church over the synagogue. This, according to his interesting discussion, was motivated by a drive to move away from identifying the opponents in the book with ecclesiastical figures.

¹² It is not difficult to see how the same struggle is still continuing, as fundamentalist readings of Revelation received a new life in the amazing rapture culture of the late 20th century in a North American setting—as was already partially noted above. Cf. Rossing (2004).

4. *The limitations of historical readings*

Bousset's work on Revelation, as has been briefly noted above and as will become clear below in more detail, stressed the eschatological content of Revelation quite strongly. If he rejected all attempts to seek the fulfilment of Revelation's eschatology in contemporary church life, he also resisted attempts to restrict the future prophecies to the first century as if the author discussed events of his own time in future form. Revelation is not a report on first century history presented *ex eventu*.

Bousset thus distanced himself explicitly from a consistent historical reading of the book, without rejecting certain valuable insights it offered scholarship. He (1906, 120) appreciates its enduring and indisputable insight that the eschatology of Revelation reflects a popular expectation of the *Nero Redivivus*-myth, arguing that this historical insight determined scholarship on the book decisively—clearly because it allowed the dating of the book in the first century. Whilst he holds on to it, noting for example, that Gunkel too lightly discarded some insights of that method (e.g. that the wounded head of the beast in Revelation 13 is a reference to Nero), its outcomes were otherwise for him too arbitrary and its treatment of the text as a whole too reductionistic. The many historical reconstructions based on Revelation that were mutually contradictory, indicated the problems of this approach.

He (1906, 118) stressed that the results of decades of work in this tradition are enough to indicate its inherent problems. In this regard, Bousset quoted Gunkel approvingly about the allegorical or arbitrary nature of the contemporary historical readings. Many different historical proposals were given for specific sources, symbols and parts of the text.

An der zeitgeschichtlichen Methode tadelt er (i.e. Gunkel) vor allem das haltlose Hin- und Herraten, das Allegorisieren und Symbolisieren, das Ausdeuten im einzelnen. Leicht wird es ihm, den einen Ausdeuter der Apk mit den Deutungen des anderen durch einfaches Nebeneinander zu schlagen¹³ (Bousset 1906, 118).

¹³ He (1906, 118) concludes approvingly: "So erklärt G. zum Schluß seiner Ausführungen (233ff.) der bisherigen zeitgeschichtlichen Erklärungsweise den Bankrott!"

To read the book in this consistent historical manner was for Bousset (1906, 120) an indication of an outdated rationalism.

He argues that his reservations are reflected in this scholarship itself as contemporary historical interpretation¹⁴ had been losing ground and was replaced by source critical analyses (cf. below). Only a few later scholars (e.g. Völker, Spitta, Erbes—Bousset 1906, 120) still used it—and even then in a more subdued form than earlier. This in itself is already an indication that it lacks credibility and does not explain the text adequately.

However, and this is of special importance, he concludes his criticism of an overdone historical reading with his main concern, namely that this approach neglects the *eschatological* nature of the book. In a book like Revelation, with its focus on the future, he argues, it is to be expected that historical references and allusions would be restricted. With this, an interesting change takes place in his thinking: it is not historical analysis that determines eschatology, but the nature and contents of the book determine historical analysis (Bousset 1906, 118).

The implications of this perspective on the regulating nature of the eschatological perspective on historical work cannot be stressed too strongly—especially in the light of ongoing historical work that is still being done in our time on Revelation. In terms of Bousset's argument, the final form of the text with its overriding eschatological view should not be atomized by relating parts of it to extratextual historical events. From this, another important hermeneutical insight is developed: the text as a whole should steer the historical interpretation and its final form determines the extent to which historical work can be done. Why this is the case, will be discussed in more detail below. Before this can be done, another focus in the historical survey of Bousset needs more attention, since it will too illuminate more about his remarks about the final form of the text.

5. *Criticising and modifying source criticism*

Bousset's commentary excels in its discussions of the history of scholarly interpretation, summarizing insights of previous generations of

¹⁴ This is my translation of the German *Zeitgeschichtlich*, used by Bousset in the sense of placing Revelation exclusively within first century history.

scholars in the field and trends in their work, pointing out the limitations that were inherent in their writings and underlining their enduring insights in the process of understanding Revelation. This is particularly true of his extensive and helpful discussion of source criticism (called by him the “literarkritische Methode”;¹⁵ cf. 1906, 108–118).

Bousset shows how the solutions by scholars in preceding decades display two general trends. Scholarship was preoccupied with finding sources in Revelation that a last editor or compiler either mechanically conflated or, alternatively, superficially reworked. This theory then debated either the Jewish or the Christian nature of these sources—assuming that they were written in earlier historical contexts and that they could still be identified as and in specific passages in the book.¹⁶

Bousset is careful to stress that he does not reject this source critical work completely. He emphasizes that his own approach is complementary, even preparatory to it (Bousset 1906, 116; esp. 118).¹⁷ However, despite his subtle positioning, his own position is strongly critical of that work. He is clearly aware that his own approach represents a new moment in the history of interpretation of Revelation.

There were some groundbreaking reasons for his criticism of source critical scholarship, as will become clear from the discussion below—reflecting some of the reasons why he rejected contemporary historical readings of the text (as discussed above). Here it can be briefly noted that Bousset (1906, 109) was especially sceptical about finding such sources because of the structured and coherent nature of the last phase of the book.¹⁸ Although the text is an intricate product of several other texts—as revealed by the seams that bind them

¹⁵ The name can be misleading and should be distinguished from the much later literary approach to the NT that represents a completely different method in which the final text is read in terms of its literary qualities rather than to find sources behind it. In this essay, I shall qualify the method by describing it somewhat cumbersome as literary source criticism.

¹⁶ He refers (1906, 115), amongst others, to the work of Schmidt who regarded Revelation as a compilation of five sources (in 4:1–7:8; 8:2–11:15; 10:1–11:13; 12:1–22:5; 14:6–20, 17:1–19:5) by a redactor.

¹⁷ This was noted with appreciation (and relief?) in a major review of Holtzmann (1897, 386–387).

¹⁸ Bousset (1906, 118) notes Gunkel’s warning against “eine übereilte literarkritische Methode”.

together, the final author created a cohesive unit.¹⁹ In any study of Revelation, he argued, researchers must move beyond focussing on the obvious breaks in the text that suggest the existence and use of sources and also account for the impressive literary unity of the book on the one hand (cf. further below). One of the most telling remarks is: “Man vergass aber leider bei der nun beginnenden Jagd (!) nach Quellen und bei allen sich gegenseitig immer wieder aufhebenden Rekonstruktionsversuchen die Apk zugleich als eine literarische Einheit, als welche sie sich doch gibt, zu betrachten” (Bousset 1906, 121).

Once again, Bousset’s position against these scholars is determined by his perspective on the text in its final form—as was the case with his criticism of the contemporary historical scholars. This “final text” and its nature, demands more attention now.

6. *Literary unity*

What makes Bousset’s commentary so striking is the way in which he underlined the literary unity of Revelation and the hermeneutical implications that he drew from it—something that can still be of special value to modern scholarly work. The literary unity of Revelation has been acknowledged and studied increasingly in recent times (e.g. by such scholars like Griblin 1991; Barr 1998; Resseguie 1998; De Villiers 2002; 2004a; 2004b). There are still occasional doubts about the literary unity, as is clear from the commentary by Aune (1993), who retained Charles’ theory that the book was edited by a final author. But the steadily growing conviction of the overall coherence of Revelation finds interesting support in Bousset’s work.

Bousset (1906, 147) remarked about Revelation’s impressive and coherent final form by comparing it with other apocalypses and remarking,

Kein Werk der jüdische Apokalyptik ist so straff und kunstvoll komponiert, in keinem hat der Verfasser des Ganzen den eingearbeiteten Fragmenten und dem übernommenen Material eine so einheitliche Färbung und Tendenz zu geben, wie in diesem Buch. . . . Und wie baut sich doch das Ganze künstlerisch auf!

¹⁹ Note his important remarks (1906, 113).

It is in line with this overall coherence that Bousset would defend, for example, the unity of the seven letters—not only individually and mutually, but also with the rest of the book (cf. Bousset 1906, 234–236).²⁰ Two matters are relevant here—one of detail, the second more general.

Regarding the detail, Bousset argues first of all that each one of the seven letters displays coherence in itself. The seven form a neat pattern of letters and then, finally, fit in well in the first three chapters and in the book as a whole. In this regard, he refers to source critics who argued that the seven letters are compilations of an editor since their conclusions are all similar (it consists of a warning and a promise—with the warning preceding the promise in the first three and following it in the last four). The conclusions reveal the editorial activity of a compiler (Bousset 1906, 235). Bousset found this unconvincing. For him these “additions”, read together, reveal a literary technique of the author who created a 3 plus 4 pattern through them—which is a typical technique of the author who wrote the book as a whole (Bousset 1906, 234–235).²¹ What is to source critics an indication of loose compilation, is for Bousset a sign of the literary creativity of the final author.

Regarding the general picture and of significance for the understanding of the book, Bousset also responds to source critics who argued that the seven letters were originally letters sent to each of the churches and then taken up by a redactor in his text. Noting that the seven letters are apocalyptic in nature (“apokalyptisch Sendschreiben”; 1906, 236), he stresses that they were all intended for the church as a whole and designed as literary texts. This is clear from the simple fact that through the promises and warnings at the end of each letter, all seven of them are directed to the church as a whole. In the first three chapters then, the churches are thought of as a group and are addressed together.²² In this way, Bousset

²⁰ Holtzmann (1897, 386) noted in his review of the first edition how Bousset stressed the unity of the book. He particularly notes his argument that there is no convincing reason why the author of the book could not have done what was then often ascribed to an editor.

²¹ On the significance of this insight and of the coherence of the book generally for understanding Revelation, cf. De Villiers (2002a; 2002b; 2004a; 2004b).

²² How ironical this literary perspective is, is clear once one compares this work with commentaries that were being produced in the United Kingdom at that time. Bousset’s work made little of such theories as that of Ramsay (s.a.), later taken over

argues that a competent author created a book that displays special coherence—in terms of its contents, but also in terms of its rhetorical communication with the church as a whole. This is particularly clear when Bousset resists an atomistic reading of the seven letters as being addressed to seven individual churches and insists that they should be read together as bringing a message to the church in general.

At this point, attention must also be drawn to another major insight that Bousset provided in his commentary.²³ His arguments for the coherence of Revelation are not based merely on contents. He finds that the unity of the book is confirmed, amongst others, by the consistent similar use of language and style in all parts of the book (Bousset 1906, 126)—a point stressed by him against the source critics and pointed out by him as a much-neglected insight in previous research.

Die durchschlagende Grund gegen jede Quellentheorie ist aber *die durchaus gleichmässige Haltung in der Sprache und Stil des ganzen Buches* (original italics).

And even stronger,

Es zeigt sich nun aber im Gegenteil in den verschiedenen Teilen der Apk in Sprachgebrauch und Stil, in grammatischen Eigentümlichkeiten und einzelnen einmal geprägten Wendungen eine überraschende Gleichartigkeit bis in die geringsfügigsten Einzelheiten.

In this way, *formal indications*, based on the text itself, form a vital part of his position.

This emphasis of Bousset on coherence is not always easy to comprehend, since he states elsewhere that it is an unassailable result of literary criticism that Revelation is not a cohesive composition. Bousset (1906, 125), remarks: “Bei alledem bleibt es als wohl kaum wieder umzustoßendes Resultat bestehen, daß die Apk als einheitlichen Schrift nicht zu begreifen ist, und somit tritt die Literarkritik in ihr Recht

by Charles (1920) and countless other scholars (e.g. Beckwith 1919; cf. Caird 1966 and Hemer 1986) that each of the seven letters should be read against the natural and physical background of their location and interpreted in terms of the information.

²³ Cf. e.g. Bousset (1906, 242) where he stresses the point again to underline the unity between the seven letters and the rest of the book.

und in ihre Arbeit ein"—apparently contradicting himself.²⁴ He discusses as evidence for this lack of unity, several smaller passages that disturb the flow of the text. Revelation 1:7–8 on the 144 000 sealed believers, for example, comes as an interruption after the series of seals.

On this point he must be understood well: his remarks on the lack of cohesion were intended to stress the use of traditional material by the author. In terms of the contents of the letter, for example, he discusses some smaller passages that disturb the coherence of the whole and does not really fit in the book as a whole.²⁵ Revelation 1:7–8 is in his eyes (1906, 122) such a "rätselhaften und abgebrochenen Fragment". Even a longer fragment like Rev 10:1–11:13 is read in the same manner—a rather puzzling insertion if taken on its own.

Nevertheless, he argues that these fragments did not land in the text because an author simply collated them mechanically. They were deliberately included in the text because they were available in written form and the author felt that he needed to use them (Bousset 1906, 122).²⁶ With this Bousset wanted to underline that the author did not compose his text completely *ex novo*. He was

einen apokalyptischen Schriftsteller, der jedoch in vielen Punkten nicht aus freier Hand schuf, sondern ältere apokalyptische Fragmente und

²⁴ Also Bousset (1906, 123): "Das alles sind unüberwindliche Hindernisse für die Annahme eines durchaus einheitlichen Charakters der Schrift". Cf. also his later remarks (1906, 141). But note how carefully he formulates here, "es scheint fast so, als hätte er die Absicht, nicht bloß eine bestimmte Weissagung zu geben, sondern ein *corpus apocalypiticum* zu schreiben, eine Sammlung von damals im Umlauf befindlichem apokalyptischen Material *unter einem einheitlichem Gesichtspunkt* zu veranstellen". It is interesting to note how the two reviews of Holtzmann (1897; 1907) downplay this important insight.

²⁵ This is important once it is understood how Bousset responds not only against the negative evaluation of the author as an editor or compiler in literary source criticism, but also against the recapitulation theory—since that theory also fragmented the text in his eyes. He notes (1906, 120) that in his own time this theory was still defended energetically by Hofmann, Hengstenberg, Evrard, Kienlen and Löhr. In 1906, 122 he refers to this theory again when he notes that earlier scholars regarded Revelation 12 as the beginning of the last recapitulation. It is interesting to note that passages that Bousset regarded as incoherent include some that were described as intercalations in later research. They appear, for example, in Rev 7:1–8, and 14:1–5. His problems with these passages undoubtedly relates to his linear understanding of the narrative. Once Revelation is read from a recapitulation perspective, the problems that Bousset had with it, are solved.

²⁶ "Ihm lag hier eine Quelle vor, die er einarbeiten mußte".

Überlieferung, deren Überlieferung vorläufig noch dunkel bleibt, verarbeitet (Bousset 1906, 129; cf. esp. 140–141).²⁷

However, here one should once again dig a bit deeper. The reason why an author could incorporate such diverse material was to be found in the apocalyptic nature of his fragments. “Gerade in Apokalypsen hält sich ungestört Altes neben Neuem. In dieser phantastischen Welt geht der Blick und Sinn für derartige Unterschiede verloren” (Bousset 1906, 123). For Bousset, the unity was not only to be found formally and contents wise in the text. The genre of the text allows for inconsistencies—also in terms of time and progress.²⁸ In this way, the unity of the text is grounded in its apocalyptic nature as well.

There is, finally, another reason for the unity that Bousset stressed strongly—somewhat related to the previous point. He works, interestingly enough, with the then popular notion of the personality behind the text: the author was an independent, creative writer, who, as a *personality*, wrote a specific message in a certain time (1906, 129). Being someone steeped in apocalyptic thought, he went about writing his text in terms of this tradition, using fragments that helped him express the message he wanted to communicate. This is why Bousset set out to sketch a unified portrait of the final author that stands behind the text as a whole (cf. further below).

Bousset thus finds it so significant that the book forms a coherent whole (cf. further below), that it determines his negative evaluation of the many volumes on source criticism that characterized scholarship in the late 19th century. Though he acknowledged that this older literary criticism correctly questioned a too simplistic understanding of the coherence of Revelation by pointing to the complex

²⁷ The balancing act between the coherence of the text and its possible sources is clear also from Bousset’s remarks later on (cf. 1906, 141–142).

²⁸ He works sparingly with this insight about the undisturbed co-existence of the old and the new in apocalypses. The suggestion of Bousset indicates the need for reflection on this point, pointing to a particular apocalyptic mindset that needs to be taken seriously in order to understand logic in the narrative. Not much work has been done on logical thinking in apocalypses, although it is commonly stated that one should not apply logical Western categories on the text. In recent research, Maier (2002, 136) investigated the use of time in Revelation in more detail, noting, for example, the “playful games with time” in it where one will find “remarkable temporal variations”. Past, present and future are mixed in one passage—and this is done repeatedly throughout the book (Maier 2002, 139). Maier’s important analysis relies heavily on recent literary insights, but does not explain the text in terms of non-Western thinking and cultural differences.

nature of the book with its many traditions, he found that they, downplaying the coherence of the book, did an injustice to the text (cf. further below).

Once again, this has interesting implications for the ongoing scholarship on Revelation. This perspective of coherence determines the methodological approach to the text in quite an interesting manner. Bousset (1906, 129–130) recognized the hermeneutical implications of his perspective, noting explicitly that he wanted to determine the interpretation of the book by moving *from* the final text to details, rather than from hypothetically reconstructed and uncertain sources. He is aware that this represents a strong break in scholarship: by giving up the popular source critical notion of the author as a redactor or a compiler, he changes the way in which the text is interpreted. “Müßten wir den Apok. für einen einfachen Redaktor und Kompilator halten, dann wäre es der gewiesene Weg, mit den Quellen einzusetzen und van da zu dem Ganzen vorzudringen” (Bousset 1906, 129). Instead of moving from hypothetical sources, he prefers to work with what is fixed and unassailable—the final text—and move from there to issues about its origins.

The implications of this approach are, amongst others, that the integrity of the text is respected and that the text reveals patterns that would otherwise be unobserved. Once one reads the text from the whole to the detail, it starts to display certain typical patterns and literary techniques: the author skilfully creates a text through smaller patterns (e.g. the 4 plus 3 combination—cf. above). The text is coherent in the way it incorporates the traditions, but it is further coherent in the arrangement of the material into neat patterns.

Bousset was not alone in his appreciation for the literary coherence of Revelation. Swete who published his commentary in that time as well, stressed it even stronger, rejecting also the “History of Religion” approach of Gunkel and Bousset (1911, xlvi–liv; li) because Revelation is such a literary unity. He is even reserved about the thesis that John used other Jewish apocalypses, as Charles alleged, concluding: “This consideration does not encourage the view which regards the Apocalypse of John as a composite work largely made up of extracts from unknown non-Christian apocalypses” (Swete 1911, xlvi). The view of Swete was also directed against scholarship of his time. Following in the footsteps of predecessors like Hort on the issue of source criticism, he coolly remarked (1911, liii–liv) that the reconstruction of sources was a precarious matter.

Clearly then, in this time, there was a strong appreciation for the literary coherence of Revelation—obviously debated in terms of source criticism, but clearly based on textual evidence. All in all then, in terms of this perspective, Bousset helped scholarship to clarify at least two issues that must be explained adequately: how is it that a text that is so clearly composite, at the same time also so strongly coherent? And, secondly, his work forces the scholar to account for the text in its final form as the starting point for research on Revelation.

7. *Religious traditions*

Bousset's own method, the "History of Religion"²⁹ approach, further addressed some limitations of scholarship in his time. The author, he argued, in composing his text about the *End*, used motifs from religious traditions from all over the world that were available to him, as was noted earlier in this essay.³⁰ Bousset argued that once these smaller fragments had been established, it would be easier and better to determine what sources the author used. But more important for him is that these fragments with their religious traditions need to be discerned in order to understand the way in which the author used them to come to his own final construction about the *End*.

Bousset was aware that he was modifying the established scholarly approach of source criticism and developing an own methodology for reading Revelation.³¹ Acknowledging the unevenness of and breaks in the text, but finding that source criticism lacked an adequate explanation for them, he wanted to account for them in a way that would avoid the atomizing of the text and the neglect of its coherence. He thus argued (1906, 118) with Gunkel who also distanced himself from source criticism, that the author of Revelation

²⁹ For a very general introduction to this movement, cf. Neill and Wright (1988, 147–204, but esp. 172–179).

³⁰ Here Bousset (1906, 116) praises the work of Pfeleiderer, Jülicher and Holtzmann who, in similar vein, also argued that the author used fragments or apocalyptic pieces to construct the text in its final form.

³¹ To what extent this is a strategic pronouncement, is abundantly clear from the fact that Bousset's own reconstruction of sources (1906, 141 et ad loc.) is minimal. He explicitly states (ibid.) that he gave up reconstructing specific numbers of sources, their contents and their wording.

used ancient holy traditions rather than sources for his prophecy. The fragments he took over, go back to earliest times and were widely used over thousands of years among nations and religions (Bousset 1906, 112). Similar motifs, for example, in the Jewish and pagan worlds illuminate passages and motifs in Revelation.³² Bousset (1906, 118), clarifies the nature of these fragments as parts of a wide corpus,

Kenntnis der ganzen Traditionskette ist erforderlich, wenn man das einzelne Glied verstehen will. Und hier erhebt sich nun die Aufgabe einer religionsgeschichtlichen Forschung im grossen Stil. Denn das apokalyptischen Material ist im allgemeinen uralt und hat eine Geschichte, die über Jahrtausende und über Völker und Religionen hinüberreicht.

In the case of the Antichrist figure, for example, it is true as some argue, according to Bousset (1906, 118–119) that it refers to Nero and thus to a historical figure in the first century—as was established by the contemporary historical approach. However, it is also necessary to understand this Antichrist figure as a reworking of the ancient mythological dragon myth that we know from the Babylonian creation story.

Despite the distance to and criticism of literary and source criticism, Bousset shared similar assumptions regarding texts with them. Though he respected the integrity of the text as a whole and used it as point of departure for his own work, he also read Revelation genetically, that is, by studying the fragments and comparative religious traditions that were taken over by the author to compose his text. The author was skilful and creative, he argued, but his unique message needs to be profiled by ancient apocalyptic motifs and fragments. The process behind the book is as important to him as sources were to the literary source critics. His perspective thus was directed backwards in the direction of the origins of the text, rather than on the text itself and its particular characteristics—which explains why his own valuable insights about the literary unity of the text, though so strong, had limited consequences in his own interpretation.

Bousset's methodology for interpreting Revelation determined the NT as a discipline. His insights on this matter led to its application in the rest of the study of the NT, thus becoming the starting point

³² Bousset (1906, 119) saw his own contribution to the method in the links that he developed with Persian religion.

of this development in the field (Kümmel 1974, 251–253).³³ But the specific nature of its use in his commentary on Revelation is neglected. Within his commentary, the method assumed the unity of the text and wanted to delineate its unique and futurist eschatological message.

There can be little doubt that also in terms of the “History of Religion” approach Bousset left ongoing scholarship an enduring legacy. Also and primarily as a result of his method, the horizons for the understanding of the book broadened beyond those of previous scholars. His predecessors in the source critical approach, for example, mostly wrestled with the question whether Revelation was not more of a Jewish than Christian text. Bousset explored a much wider context. His work takes seriously the often-noted fact that many of the motifs in the book display parallels and similarities with ancient mythologies beyond the Jewish and Christian contexts.

His method also has an inherent credibility in so far as it fitted the religious situation of the Graeco-Roman world. As is clear from his remarks about the provenance of the book (Bousset 1906, 136), the plausibility of his theory is developed in terms of the Graeco-Roman culture setting—with the Roman Empire and its diverse religious nature. Taken together with his appreciation of the contemporary historical approach that established the reference to the beast as Nero, the “History of Religion” method of Bousset anchored the text firmly in its wider Graeco-Roman historical setting. After Bousset, no scholar could interpret the book without accounting for its Graeco-Roman character as well.

Finally, a short remark about the ideological implications of his method must be made. Bousset’s reaction against ahistorical literalism and dogmatic exegesis, discussed above, finds its complement in his method. He approached the text historically, placing it within the general religious situation of the Graeco-Roman world and linking the Biblical text with non-Biblical material in the pagan world—something unfamiliar to ahistorical fundamentalism. His “History of Religion” approach thus promoted historical work that included the non-Biblical and non-Christian world, broadening the scope of work done previously, but also intensifying the differences with popular,

³³ To understand the importance of this part of Bousset’s work, cf. Bauckham (1993, 195–198) where he accommodates such mythological motifs in his explanation of the passage.

fundamentalist readings. The church was no longer mainly in conflict with Judaism, as scholarship in previous decades thought, but it was in conflict with Rome and the ideological positions of Roman politics and religion.³⁴

It is on this point that a major difference between Bousset and Charles, the author of the other great commentary at the beginning of the 20th century would come to the fore. The position of Bousset is striking exactly when it is compared with Charles, who, despite his own source critical work, related the contents of the book much stronger with Jewish apocalyptic thought.³⁵

8. *Eschatology*

What is now further important, though, is that the fragments which Bousset found so significant, are all holy traditions about the *End*. This perspective is significant in order to evaluate research on Revelation. Revelation is linked by him with ancient traditions that are exclusively apocalyptic in nature, and, as a consequence, the book itself is a narrative about the *End*. In the light of the previous sections in which Bousset's argument for the literary unity of the book is underlined, this means that the text in its final form is eschatological in nature. It too often goes unnoticed how Bousset read Revelation as an eschatological text. He (1906, 118), for example, quotes Gunkel approvingly that the contemporary historical exposition of Revelation too seldomly accounted for the strict futurist eschatology of its contents.

This is, in turn, further strengthened by the related argument that Revelation is a prophetic book. On this point, some interesting information about Bousset's general situation comes to the fore. He displays (1906, 138–139) a rather split position on prophecy: the author of Revelation has an impressive and truly prophetic vision of the future. On the other hand, he takes over a bizarre and fantastic

³⁴ Cf. also the short remarks of Van Schaik (1971, iv).

³⁵ The commentary of Charles deserves separate attention. I plan to publish an article on it elsewhere. It should be noted, here, though, how already Holtzmann (1897, 383–384) pointed out the limited outcomes of the “History of Religion” approach in the commentary on Revelation, but this does not distract from its impact.

general belief, then popular among Jews and pagans about a returning ruler (Nero). In this way, profound insights in the essence of all things are linked with strange popular beliefs.³⁶

Ultimately, though, there is behind the book the *personality* of the author—but it is clearly a prophet that is writing it. “Denn es kann nicht genug hervorgehoben werden, daß der Apok. (wie übrigens so mancher seiner Künftgenossen) wirklich weissagen will und sich nicht mit dem kindlichen Spiel beschäftigt, längst Vergangenes noch einmal als zukünftig zu verkünden” (Bousset 1906, 120). This is why Bousset (1906, 138–140) focuses strongly on the powerful prophetic self-consciousness of the author.³⁷

Bousset thus, once again, stressed that Revelation has a prophetic context with an eschatological outlook. The book is driven by an author with a prophetic consciousness. In the following section, the implication of this for a historical reading of Revelation must be discussed in more detail.

9. *History*

Bousset contributed to the consolidation of a historical approach in modern scholarship in the sense that he also anchored Revelation in the first century and rejected ahistorical readings. Responding against these ahistorical and arbitrary readings, he argued (1906, 130) that the carefully crafted book has a particular message in a specific Graeco-Roman setting. The book, he wrote, originated late in the first century soon after AD 92³⁸ in the time of Domitian.³⁹

³⁶ Note his remarks (1906, 139) on the author who, he argues, is informed about Jewish Christianity, although one can hardly describe him as a Jewish Christian since he displays nothing of the position of Paul's opponents.

³⁷ Bousset (1906, 117–118) referred to Zahn's much neglected interpretation of Revelation as a text with a consistently futurist orientation, quite positively. Noting, somewhat surprised, that source criticism seems to be non-existent for Zahn, he nevertheless observes that Zahn's work represents a defence of a future eschatological reading of Revelation against a contemporary historical approach and that it provided useful insights in the book. Bousset refers to Zahn's introduction. Zahn's commentary only appeared in 1924–1926.

³⁸ Bousset (1906, 102–106) rejected the strong trend in the 18th century among scholars to date Revelation early—that is, as a prediction of the fall of Jerusalem in line with the prophetic discourse in Matthew 24.

³⁹ He bases his dating on an edict of Domitian in 92 that no new vineyards were to be planted and half of existing ones were to be destroyed.

It speaks of deep tensions between the church and the Roman Empire, not so much over the persecution of Christians, as is often said, but rather because of the Imperial cult and its religious challenge to Christianity (Bousset 1906, 132). The meaning of Revelation is thus illuminated by a particular historical situation. But, and this is the important point, this explains only a small part of the contents—in general it is a book about an imminent coming of the *End*.

The strong eschatological perspective on Revelation had consequences for the way in which Bousset viewed its historical character—most of which were pointed out briefly above. Here it is necessary to point out some significant hermeneutical issues that are raised by his perspectives on the historical situation and that are still relevant for contemporary scholarship.

If the message of the book is largely eschatological, in the sense that it mostly refers to still outstanding events, it means a limitation of the way in which its contents relate to its concrete, historical context. There is an inherent restriction of the historical interpretation of Revelation because of its basic focus on the future. In this regard, Bousset makes a seminal distinction.⁴⁰ One can argue that it is a book about the history of his own time (as was said by scholars in the consistent historical interpretation), but that would be unconvincing. Alternatively, history is being used by the author in his focus on the future. He is a prophet that wanted to speak about the future *in terms of* his historical situation.

Unter zeitgeschichtlicher Methode kann man nun freilich ein Doppeltes verstehen: bald die bestimmte Ausdeutung der Apk auf Vorgänge, die in der (nächsten) Vergangenheit des Apokalyptikers liegen, bald die Annahme, daß die Zukunftserwartungen des Sehers im allgemeinen durch den Horizont seiner zeitgeschichtlichen Situation bestimmt seien (Bousset 1906, 120).

The author did not prophesy past history *ex eventu*. His book was not merely about the (then recent) past. It was about a still outstanding future. However, he also did not write about this future *ex novo*. As a result, references to contemporary historical events would naturally be limited. Given the author and audience, this future is described with building blocks taken from their mutual context. Past

⁴⁰ He directs this as criticism against the consistent historical reading of Revelation (cf. above).

and present history provides the material with which the future is portrayed—and then, especially the religious traditions that were operative in that history. With this, the historical interpretation of the book is to a large extent determined by his “*traditionsgeschichtliche Methode*”.

It has been noted recently that Bousset was reproached (together with Gunkel) for dismantling the *Zeitgeschichtlich* approach in favour of a *traditionsgeschichtlich* reading (cf. e.g. Köhn 2004, 215). That this is true is clear from subsequent scholarship. This work was continued to some extent in the commentary and research of Lohmeyer (1953), but without much influence on subsequent scholarship. After them, much work was done, but for the rest the historical context rather than the eschatological contents would dominate the research work on the book.

10. *Conclusions*

The above essay reflected on the place of Bousset’s commentary in NT scholarship. Though he is best known for his “History of Religion” approach, his commentary is significant for several other reasons. One of the more important reasons is that he emphasized the necessity of a historical reading for a proper understanding of the text. Of special interest were the limitations he set on a historical reading by pointing to the extensive interest that the book has in the future and indirectly by focussing so extensively on the religious traditions that shape this eschatological perspective. It is in the important balance that he created between history and eschatology in the book of Revelation, that he contributed significantly to ongoing scholarship on the book.

All this points out how complicated the historical understanding of Revelation is. A historical reading need to take cognisance of a complexity of factors. In terms of the above essay, this means taking the final form of the text seriously—as point of departure for all investigations. It asks for the whole text of Revelation, not only its historical parts, to be taken seriously—thus also its future eschatological outlook. It also means understanding how the author composed his text and with what traditions he composed the text. All this, as discussed in the previous parts, provide hermeneutical insights that are still of utmost importance in the interpretation of Revelation.

Finally, though, it is necessary to point out the naïve historical position that is adumbrated in Bousset's work. History was seen as something that existed objectively outside the text and which the text "mirrors" to some extent. Researchers only had to read historical documents from that time and reconstruct a number of "events", a "history" or "traditions" that could then function as objective facts against which the text could be measured and interpreted.⁴¹ It is increasingly accepted that this is an outdated understanding of history.

The problem should not be misunderstood: the issue is not the historical approach, but its scope and its explanatory power. It remains beyond debate that a Biblical text should be read historically in terms of its origins and location in a particular time and place. What is needed, is clarifying the *nature* of the link with this historical context.

By the end of the 20th century, the many different historical reconstructions of Revelation has made us once again aware of how arbitrary scientific scholarship still is when it comes to historical reconstruction. The many different historical readings of Revelation are abundant evidence of this. The difficulties that face scholars as a result of this are illustrated by the following recent observation of Van Tilbourg (2004, 2). In a statement responding against sophisticated reconstructions of the historical context of Revelation, he makes some interesting observations:

I do not think it is possible to reconstruct from a fictional text—and the Apocalypse is in the NT a fictional text *par excellence*—the historico-sociological setting in which the book would have arisen. The social reality has influenced the thinking and the imagination of the author but in my opinion, it is not possible to retrieve this from the text. What is very well possible is to show parallel lines: to make a reconstruction of a historico-sociological reality and parallel to it to show that (parts of) the text of the Apocalypse reflects this reality; that they refer to it within this particular historico-sociological context; that the same type of language is used.

These remarks show that the nature of the link between "history" and text still needs to be discussed. Interestingly enough, Bousset, despite his naïve realist perspective, and despite other failures,⁴² left

⁴¹ Cf. the apt remarks by Swete (1911, ccxv).

⁴² It is surprising that Bousset (1906, 140) finds few significant ethical and theological contents in Revelation. This is an indication that he overemphasizes the eschatological focus of the book. Cf. for a theological evaluation, Bauckham (1996).

a legacy that in some significant ways pointed to hermeneutical keys that will help us interpret Revelation in such a way that we shall respect the integrity of the text and recognize its true character—both historically and eschatologically.

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